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The Creed of Creeds

A Series of Short Expositions
of the Apostles' Creed

By

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The Apostles' Creed.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of Sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting. Amen.

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THE PROLOGUE

THE noble and venerable formulary known as the Apostles' Creed, though presenting the essence of their Belief and Testimony, cannot be positively credited to the Apostolic Age. Indeed, whatever may have been the practice of individual churches, there is no trace in Christian Literature of any definite summaries of Christian Belief till a much later age—the age of Irenæus and Tertullian.

"It is sufficiently evident," writes Principal Tulloch, "that 'Confessions of Faith,' or 'Rules and Standards of Truth' existed in the Ante-Nicene Church from the last quarter of the second century . . . . but it is equally evident that there was no Rule of Faith universally accepted by the Church, or authoritatively imposed by any Catholic body up to the time of the Nicene Council."

The earliest form of this Creed is contained in the Confessions of Faith, presented to Julius, Bishop of Rome, by Marcellus, the Bishop of Ancyra, about the year A.D. 336. *He describes it as the faith, which he "learnt and was taught from the Holy Scriptures."*

Substantially then the Apostles' Creed was in existence probably from the end of the Fourth Century, though there is no evidence of its general reception, in its completed form, till about the middle of the Eighth Century.

It has always captivated the Christian Imagination and Heart, because of its simplicity, its brevity, its freedom from elaborate theological phraseology; and probably a larger number of Christian people, of all churches and sects, could unite in reciting it, than any other statement of Christianity in existence. For this reason I venture to term it the CREED OF CREEDS.

Probably it is the one Creed in which all Christendom could unite. A striking evidence of this was given in the recent World-Baptist Congress, when at the request of the venerable Dr. Maclaren, the entire assembly of three thousand delegates, from all parts of the earth, stood and repeated, with impressive emphasis, these well-known clauses. The episode was the more remarkable, as the Baptist denomination has always shown itself very conservative in the adoption of forms or liturgies of any kind. It is recognised, however, among all branches of the Church of Christ, that no one communion can claim any exclusive proprietorship in this great Creed. All schools of

theology may meet in its ancient precincts, piled by builders who have long since passed from faith to sight.

In preparing these brief expositions of its several clauses, I have made use of notes gathered long since, in one or two of the earlier of which are traces of the BOSTON LECTURES. *I cannot recall any others to whom I should make acknowledgment. This little treatise is placed at the service of the One Church, in the underlying Unity of which we all believe, and when the time arrives for the outward manifestation of that Unity, surely the Apostles' Creed will take a foremost place in the expression of the common and universal Faith.*

F. B. MEYER.

THE CREED OF CREEDS

The Uncertainty of Natural Religion

It cannot be denied that races which lie outside the sphere of Revealed Religion have possessed materials of arriving at the knowledge of God. The creation of the world has made known His power and Godhead; sunshine or rain, fruitful seasons and fertile soils have told of His daily care; great prophets and teachers, rearing themselves aloft above their fellows, have caught the beams of His glory, and reflected them; the Light that lighteth every man coming into the world has illumined conscience and heart; the geographical situation and location in the world's development have been so contrived as to induce men to seek after God and fumble about the latch of his Glorious Temple, if haply they might find Him; and thus many have attained to very wise and true conceptions of the Divine Nature. We have only to quote some of the expressions in the ancient Vedic Hymns, or paragraphs from the writings of Seneca, to establish this. And it

is in reference to such conclusions of the human mind, apart from the clear teachings of Revelation that the last of the prophets cries: "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord, and in every place incense is offered unto my name and a pure offering."

But at the best there was deep uncertainty mingled with all these conclusions, however wise and good. In Athens, an altar was erected to the unknown God, whom this very religious people worshipped in ignorance. In Egypt one of the most famous Temples bore on its portico the legend, "I am He that was, and is, and shall be, but no mortal hath lifted my vail." Granted that the summer spoke of God's love, what of winter with her storms. Was not the message of the Pleiades cancelled by that of Orion? Did not the brightest and longest days descend at last into the dark tomb of the night? The mind of man hovered between the two extremes, but on the whole yielded to the darkest suspicions and fears. Hence the awful rites with which Priests, on behalf of their fellows, sought to propitiate and soothe the Divine Nature. The conclusions of Natural Religion find an apt expression in the Book of Job: "Touching the

mighty, we cannot find Him out. . . . Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat ! "

Equally uncertain were men in their conclusions about Forgiveness and the Future Life. They *hoped* that their sins might be pardoned, but they were never sure how much was required for the Divine satisfaction. Should they give their first-born for their transgressions, the fruit of their bodies for the sins of their souls ? And as to the existence of the soul beyond death,—it passed, so the wisest said, to a land of darkness and of the shadow of death, a land of thick darkness, as darkness itself ; a land of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light was as darkness. The bewildering uncertainty of the wisest and best of men was very pitiful. They peered into the thick curtain of black night which surrounded their lives, and said that they were reminded of the flights of a sparrow through a brilliantly lit hall, coming out of the wintry blasts on the one hand, and after a brief space of warmth and colour, returning to them again, but no one knew whence or whither.

We can hardly realise the intensity with which the mariners of those days, as they heard the surf beating on the rocks, longed for day to break

on the spiritual horizon. Agitated by conscience, driven by fear, conscious of a Presence they could not comprehend, approaching the infinite mystery of an impenetrable secret, the heart of man cried aloud for light, that it might live in hope and die in peace.

There is something of this in our own age also. To many amongst us black gulfs of doubt open on every side, and in desperation multitudes are flying for refuge either in positivism which leaves out of account the yearnings, the instincts, the peremptory facts of the soul, or in the assumed infallibility of the Roman Church, which rules the spirit through the confessional and strives to silence it by papal edicts or interdicts. Amid these false harbours, and misleading lights, how great a relief it is to turn to the calm certainty of Christian truth.

The Certainty of the New Testament

FROM Matthew onward to the Apocalypse, however much the books of the New Testament differ in other respects, they are marked by one invariable characteristic which accosts us on every page; and that is *the solemn tone of certainty* which pervades them. There is not a single breakdown into speculation or balancing of probabilities. Such was the verdict of a beloved friend of mine, the Rev. Edward White, who, after a life of vigorous conflict came to be as much revered for the saintliness and sweetness of his disposition as he was respected for his learning and acumen. It is not necessary to have recourse to his pages for sufficient evidence of this special trait in the New Testament writers. The signs of it are to be discovered on every page.

Writing to his friend, Theophilus, the Evangelist *Luke* affirms that the facts of the Gospel were *surely believed* amongst the Christians with whom he consorted, and that he had set himself to a careful and accurate tracing down of them all from the very first, that his friend might fully

know the *certainty* of the things in which he had become instructed (Luke i. 1-4).

The Apostle Peter asserts that they had not followed cunningly devised fables, when his fellow apostles and himself had made known the power and coming of the Lord Jesus, but that the word of prophecy had been *made sure* to them (2 Peter i. 16, 19). And he does not hesitate to describe the basis of Christianity as A ROCK, a solid Rock, so that he who believed and built on it could not be confounded (1 Peter ii. 6-8).

John, the beloved Apostle, is not less emphatic. He tells us what he had seen with his eyes, and handled with his hands, concerning the Word of Life, and that he bore witness and declared what he had seen and felt, that his readers might share with him the joy of a certain knowledge (1 John i. 1-4). His First Epistle rings with the words *we know*. "*We know* that the Son of God is come." . . . . ; "*We know* Him that is true." . . "*We know* that we have passed from death unto life." . . . . "*We know* that we shall be like Him." . . . .

Or if we turn to the Epistles of the last and *greatest of the Apostles*, the most cursory examination of his Epistles is sufficient to convince the enquirer that his mind and heart reposed on the

most absolute certainty of the Gospel which he proclaimed—both in the facts on which it rested and the deductions which were made from them. His favourite word is *Epignosis* to describe the deep and searching knowledge of the Christian disciple. He says that we must no longer be children tossed on the waves and carried to and fro by every current, but ought to arrive at the unity of the faith of *the thorough knowledge* of the Son of God (Eph. iv. 13). He protests that he dared not cease praying until his converts have been brought to a condition of *thorough knowledge*, according to the Image of Him who has created them (Col. i. 9; iii. 10). He insists on *the full assurance of understanding, the solid certainty of fact* on which the Christian faith rested, and *the confidence or boldness* which were the necessary result (Col. ii. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 12; see also Heb. iv. 16, x. 19). He said, "We *believe* and therefore speak;" and again, "We *know* that if this earthly house be broken up, we have a house not made with hands; and yet again, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any Gospel other *than that which we preached unto you*, let him be anathema."

Throughout, the sacred writers speak as those for whom the vail had been rent, and the darkness

dissipated. They know whom and what they had believed, and were persuaded. They asserted that they had received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which was of God, that they might know the things which ordinary men had not seen with their eyes, nor heard with their ears, though they had been freely given them by God.

It was this accent of assured certainty that captivated the world. Just at the moment when the old religions which had held the allegiance of the foremost races were tottering to their fall, and when the most absolute despair that had ever enwrapped the world was settling like a pall over the minds of men, there burst on their astonished ear the assertion, on the part of simple and unlearned witnesses, that they had found the Truth and the Truth had made them free.

The witness-bearers were put to every conceivable test. Their quality was tested by fire and sword. They were confronted by every kind of opposition from the sneers of Roman proconsuls to the contempt of Athenian sages, but they never wavered. Had they stood as sponsors for a new system of philosophy, they might have yielded to superior intellects, and been put to shame and silenced ; but when it was a question of facts which are equally within the cognisance

of fishermen and artisans as of philosophers, they could not renounce their affirmation that God had been manifested in the flesh, seen of angels, believed among the Gentiles, and received up in glory.

If so much Certainty, why all the Diversity?

THERE is Diversity! Christendom resembles a mosaic of different patches of colour. The Greek, the Roman, the Anglican Churches, and some hundred differing denominations, fill the air with their protestations that they possess the Truth. They profess that what they teach is the original doctrine of the Apostles, and some of them add, that to diverge from their doctrines and formularies is to run the risk of perishing everlastingly.

Now it should be admitted at the outset that each of these bodies has some truth given it in charge, else it could not continue; and that speaking generally, the affirmations are true, whilst the limitations and negations are false. But why is it, since the Apostles were so positive in their declarations, that these infinite varieties exist? The answer surely lies in the distinction between the facts on which Christianity rests, and the deductions or doctrines which have been made from them.

In the facts the immense preponderance of Christians are agreed. That Jesus the Son of

Mary after the flesh was born in the days of Cæsar Augustus, lived, died, and rose from the dead, that He ascended into Heaven and gave the Holy Spirit to His Church, are accepted as facts by the most diverse sections of the professing Church. A striking illustration of this was given during the debates in the House of Commons on the Education Bill. Between Mr. Healy, a loyal son of the Roman Church, and the large numbers of Free Churchmen, Radicals, and Socialists who crowded the benches on one side of the House, there could have been as small a degree of common ground as between him and the Anglican Churchmen who sat on the other, but the whole house was hushed and united in the sense of a great unity, as in a voice broken with passionate emphasis and emotion, he closed his speech with these touching words, "If there be one thing which I and mine have a grip of, it is this—the belief in the Infinite Christ to come; yes, and the belief that our children, whatever be their distresses, their misfortunes, their poverty, if they have listened to the teaching and put in practice the lessons given them by the priest in the Catholic schools, they will hereafter reap a rich and an exceeding great reward."

With the *explanations* which the Apostles give

of the facts of the Gospels, there is also very general accord. It is the unvarying assertion of the Apostles that those explanations were revealed to them by the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul, for instance, says that God made known to him the inner meaning, or mysteries of the gospel of the Spirit, and that he spoke in words which the Holy Spirit taught. He declares most solemnly that the gospel which he preached was not after men, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. He refers also to the mould of doctrine into which the faith of his converts had been poured. On the whole it may be said that Christendom accepts these explanations, and reads into the facts recorded in the Gospels thoughts and conceptions which would not otherwise be associated with them; as for instance, that the Death of the Cross was a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and the Resurrection and Ascension an entrance into the Holiest of the High Priest.

But it is when we come to the *deductions* drawn from these explanatory statements that the infinite varieties of the creeds of churches assert themselves. Opinions are as numerous as minds. The pure light is reflected from thousands of different facets and angles. Human views and

conceptions of truth are distorted by the medium through which they reach us, by the prevalence of preconceived notions, by the effect of heredity and early training, by hasty generalizations and one-sided views, and by the strong effect which one mind exercises over another. For these and similar reasons, we group ourselves differently, arrange ourselves under diverse flags, take up strong dogmatic positions, and crystallize into Churches and Denominations.

If we trusted less in our intellect and more to our heart, if we calmed and quieted ourselves as weaned babes in absolute childlikeness and simplicity of soul, if we were slower to speak and quicker to listen, if instead of reprimanding one another we were more eager to bring others into the unity of the faith of the knowledge of the Son of God, if we magnified essentials more and non-essentials less, if we put Christ before creeds, and His Glory above Churches, it is probable that the Lord's Prayer for our manifested oneness would seem less of a far-away dream, and more of a practical reality.

But it must be re-affirmed, for it is so often lost sight of, that there is substantial agreement among Christians of every name "that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures;

that He was buried, and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures; that as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead, and as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations."

No Special Claims of the Apostles' Creed

It is not possible to trace it to its origin. Almost certainly it was not the product of the Apostolic Age. But it has commended itself to all Christian people, because it deals almost exclusively with the great facts of the Gospel story, and with the simplest inspired explanations of those facts; whilst it abstains from those niceties of definition which accost us in the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds. It was this characteristic that led the venerable Dr. Maclaren to call on the World's Assembly of representative Baptists in 1905 to join with him in repeating the Apostles' Creed, as an expression of their oneness with the entire Church of Christ.

There can be no thought of imposing this or any other creed on the Christian conscience. No man or set of men has any right to insist on the acceptance by individuals or churches of any form of words, however venerable of age, or consecrated by use. No formulary known to man can comprehend the whole horizon of truth ; and there are probably thousands who might not accept every item even of the Apostles' Creed, simple and elementary as it appears, but their names are undoubtedly written in the Lamb's

Book of Life, and they are included in the Holy Church of the Redeemed.

How thankful we should be that the truth about God's Redeeming Grace is not given in a series of abstract propositions, but in the living Person of Jesus, in His life and words, His wonderful deeds and death! There is as much difference between the conceptions of theologians and the narratives of the Gospels, as between the Laws of Scientists and the outspread face of Nature. Thank God, we say again, that the Apostles' Creed is not an integral part of Scripture, else only those would be stamped with the mint-mark of Christianity who accepted it, whilst those who hesitated about its least particular would be consigned to the uncovenanted mercies of God.

No, our salvation does not consist in any intellectual *Credo*. The devils believe and tremble; whilst the dying thief who had only the dimmest possible vision of the nature of Christ was saved. The faith of the mind may be perfectly orthodox, and yet exercise no saving effect upon character or life, but it thereby shows itself to be a dead faith, since it is without works or fruit. Whereas the faith of the heart, which may fasten on some tiny fragment of Christ's Person, which touches the hem of His garment, which

opens its window in the dark to admit the cassia fragrance of His Person is certainly accepted and instructed. *Salvation does not consist in our belief about Christ, but in our trust in Him.* There must, of course, be some knowledge of His Person and Work, but this may be very fragmentary and slender, and yet the soul's faith will link it to Him that was, and is, and is to come, for evermore. Not the Bible, but Christ of whom the Bible speaks, not the Creed, but Christ of whom the Creed is true, not the Sacraments, but Christ who instituted them, not the Atoning Death of Christ, but Christ who made the Atonement, must ever be the object of the soul's faith. And again, we repeat it, there are many who may be unable to pass the test of the Creed, to whom, because the soul has exercised the right attitude towards Him, our Lord will say at last, "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the World."

But though the obligatory use of the Creed, as a test of Christianity, may be resisted, it will be generally admitted that it serves as a *most useful* synopsis and compendium of the great facts of our Common Faith, and in this sense it may be made use of and prized by all Christians.

It is deeply impressive to hear a great company of men and women repeat these noble words. On the great Pacific or Atlantic liners, in log-shanties, in the midst of Mohammedan, Hindoo, or Chinese populations, the heart must be torpid and irresponsive indeed that is not moved by the recitation of these venerable sentences. In face of the Infidelity that says there is no God, of the Agnosticism that cries we cannot know, of the Pantheism which confounds God with His works, of the Followers of the False Prophet who assert that Mahomet is the supreme Prophet of the Most High, it is a great act for a group of people, who would probably agree in nothing else, to stand together to affirm that they believe in the Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, their Lord.

The position of the Apostles' Creed in the Service of the Church of England is specially noteworthy. Coming as it does after the great outbursts of adoration and worship, and before the Intercessions and Supplications of the congregation, it seems almost the climax of the Liturgy, the highest point of the upward climb from the lowest penitence to the shining tablelands where God Himself is Sun.

THE CREED OF CREEDS

I

"I Believe in God"

In the rainless, smokeless air, the temples, public buildings, and statues of Athens must have stood out in clear-cut beauty, as the Apostle rose to make his defence before the most cultured and critical audience of the age. The faces which met his were not only exquisitely chiselled by nature, but were refined by habitual contemplation of the highest themes that can engage the heart of man. They, however, confessed themselves *Agnostic* as to the Existence and Nature of the Supreme Being. The altar which he had espied among many others testified to this. The inscription which it bore upon its face contained that word. The contrast was therefore the more startling when the stranger, whose disputations in the Agora had aroused so much interest, opened his address by saying : *Whom ye worship, without knowing, Him I declare unto you—God that made the world and all things therein.*

It is a noble position for any man to take up and maintain in a world of agnostics. It is a great thing to be able to say, *I believe in God.*

That magnificent affirmation can only be made by a reverent, thoughtful, pure-hearted soul, whose windows stand open to the Infinite. *Nature* cannot say it. Like a mirror she can flash the Glory of God from world to world, as birds pass their morning carol from tree to tree, but she cannot say, *I believe in God.* The brute creatures may recognise their owners and "their master's crib," but they cannot say, *We believe in God.* The idiot and the sensualist are alike excluded from the grandeur of these words. It needs manhood, intelligence, sobriety, self-control, reverence, before the heart can inspire, and the lips utter, the first clause of the Creed, *I believe in God.*

Obviously the grounds on which this affirmation rests differ widely from those on which students of nature are wont to rest their arguments. They use the hammer, crucible, or chemical test, the scalpel or microscope, which convey their message immediately to the senses of sight, touch, or taste. But the existence and nearness of God cannot be proved to human sense. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." He cannot be unveiled to the eye; nor touched by the hand reached out to feel Him in the dark; nor inhaled as a scent or breath. To all these tests He is as impalpable

as the love of your most intimate and devoted friendship. The Being of God is only apprehended by the spirit of man, which is probably endowed with senses which correspond to those of the body. It too has its sight, its touch, its hearing, and its taste; to which, when they are awake, and not drenched by materialism and sensuality, it is as easy to demonstrate the Being of God as the existence of matter. "The spiritual man discerneth all things, though he himself is discerned of no man." Clean and uncurtain the windows of your inner life. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Be absolutely true to your highest ideals. If the Dawn is not yet on the sky, yet face the east, and as certainly as you seek you shall find. The light of the glory of God will break on you. "He that is of the Truth heareth My voice."

It will come to you thus: If there be a God, He must be a *Thinker;* the universe is everywhere full of thought; and on your heart and mind thoughts will steal of purity and wide horizons, and lofty inspirations. If there be a God, He must be *Full of Force and Energy;* the worlds bear witness to the Presence of some mysterious pressure behind them, urging them forward; and through your being, you will become aware of

the thrill of His energy. If there be a God, He must be *Love ;* for this is universally diffused in lower and higher forms amongst His creatures, and if you are still you will experience in moments of depression, and penitence, the wafting of a warm breeze of tenderness across your weary, fevered spirit. If there be a God, He must be *Truth ;* for the heart of man bears witness to this as its highest attribute, and it is impossible that what is so prominent in man can be deficient in Him who is postulated as the origin and source ; and you may verify this, as you listen to the voice which expostulates within you against all that is base and false and mean. Thus each man carries within His own heart the means by which He can verify the existence of God, so that for himself and by the exercise of his own faculties, he may be able to say, *I believe in God.*

It fell to my lot the other morning to cross Westminster Bridge, as the dawn was breaking over the noble forms of the buildings which line the river-front. Before me lay the Houses of Parliament, the venerable Abbey, and the long array of the Embankment carrying the eye to the Dome of St. Paul's rising out of the morning haze. Beside me was St. Thomas' Hospital. I had hardly passed it, when I became conscious

of an unwonted sound—the lapping of the Thames against the steps. I had never heard it before, because never before had I crossed the bridge when the noise of the traffic was hushed. So is it with the soul. Amid life's busy rush, we cannot hear the inner whisper which attests the Being of God: but when the day is done, the stars glimmer out; when feet cease to trample the forest, squirrels, rabbits, and birds reveal their presence; when the heart is hushed, a voice is heard crying, *I believe in God.*

II

"I Believe in God the Father"

It was a great day in the evolving story of the Universe, when Man, as a High Priest, robed and crowned, could stand forth and say, *I believe in God;* but perhaps it was a greater, when after ages of thought and observation, the Divine Spirit enabled him to add the words, *I believe in God, the Father*. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

The yearning of the heart for love postulates and proves—unless existence be an insoluble riddle, an aimless maze—that there is a responsive Love behind the painted curtain that screens the eternal and infinite from our view. Do fish flash from the still surface of the lake for food which is not provided—each fly for its own season? Do swallows preen their wings for flight to summer lands, which do not exist, or which they shall never reach? Does the young lion cry for food, which it shall search for in vain through the forest-glade? Does not the yearning of the babe, its outcry or its silent tears, prove that there is a

mother's heart, which cannot forget the sucking child, and a fountain of nourishment in the maternal breast? So the unsatisfied yearning of the human heart, which turns even from the tender love of woman to call aloud for a Love which is altogether satisfying and complete, proves that there must be a Father's Heart, a Father's Pity, and a Father's Forgiveness, waiting to run to meet, to kiss, to clothe with the new robe, and feast with song and dance.

This was the supreme message of Jesus to the world. His teachings about the necessity of Propitiation and Sacrifice, though unmistakable, were subordinate to the constant reiteration of the Fatherhood of God. He had come from "the bosom of the Father": and to the Father He was to return. It was His meat and drink to do the Father's will. Heaven was the Father's House with its many mansions. He that had seen Him had seen the Father, because He was in the Father, and the Father in Him. When we pray, He taught us to say, "Our Father which art in Heaven."

There can be no doubt that there is an inner circle of Sonship. Those who receive Christ have the right or power to become Sons of God in an inner or more vital sense, and because they are

sons, the Spirit of the Son is sent into their hearts, whereby they cry, "Abba, Father" (John i. 12; Gal. v. 1, 2). But as the Apostle said, All men are God's sons, in the true and deep sense of being His offspring (Acts xvii. 28). The fatherly tenderness and love of God go far over the entire range of humanity. They are not confined to a favoured few, who stand in the inner golden circle. There is no fragment of humanity that, by virtue of its creation, may not stand beneath the blue heavens, and pointing upwards, say, *I believe in God the Father*, adding softly: "O, my Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son."

Like a Father He forgives. He takes on Himself the loss, the cost, the shame of our sin, and to how much these amount we have no clue save the mysterious anguish of the Garden and the Cross; and He gives His pardon to each penitent and believing soul, so absolute that it resembles the obliteration by the incoming tide of the rude figures and letters that children had scored on the smooth surface of the sand. Ah, sinful child, thy tears and prayers, thy confessions and vows have not lost their way in the dark night. They have travelled, like some wireless message to the

Divine Lover of Men. "Thy prayers are heard and thine alms are come up as a memorial before God;" but it is not on account of one or the other that thou art forgiven, but because of His free grace and mercy, "declared unto us in Christ Jesus, our Lord." Hark, He speaks—Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven. Rise up, go thy way and live thy life under the sure conviction that Heaven and Earth may pass, but that Word shall stand for ever.

As a Father He comforteth. The prophet uses a yet tenderer phrase, and tells us that God comforts as mothers do. Yet men are very tender, when their little child is sobbing as if its heart would break. If God's tenderness is in proportion to the infiniteness of His nature, is there any exaggeration in the Psalmist's conception of His putting our tears into His bottle, as infinitely precious, and writing our sobs down in His Book. Poor tired child, lean back and lie with all thy weight near His heart, He knows thy sorrows, is acquainted with thy grief. He will not let the fire burn or the waters drown. He will sustain thee in the trial and when it has done its perfect work will wipe away thy tears.

As a Father He encourages. A little child going up a dark stairway to his bedroom was fearful

of the goblins that haunted the shadows, unless his mother stood at the foot of the stairs and kept talking to him till he reached his room. So our Father's voice sounds through the dark spaces of life, saying: "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I will help thee;" and we can say, as we hear His well-known voice, with renewed emphasis: "*I believe in God the Father.*"

III

"The Father Almighty"

We talk of *laws*, and the word veils our ignorance. What is law, but an expression for the orderly and regular working of Force. When we speak of law we only define the method in which force works, but say nothing about the force which underlies it. Consider the mighty energies which are at work on every side of us, the rush of the wind, the pulse of the tide, the waves of light, the thrill of magnetism, the throb of heat. Yes, and beneath all, the mysterious powers of radium and ether, which are probably destined to be the great dynamics of the coming age.

What are these but variations of a deeper and more central Force, lying behind and beneath them, which is the expression of a personal will. There cannot be thought without a thinker; there cannot be plan without a controlling mind; there cannot be energy or force without an agent. When a balloon floats over a town, or a shell breaks in the air; when a volcanic wave rolls up on the beach, or a comet flashes through the dark abyss of space, you must confess that behind them there is a mind which is expressing itself

in the forth-putting of its might. And it is because of the evidences of Divine Energy around, that each of us can say, "*I believe in God the Father Almighty.*"

He is Almighty in the universe of matter. When He speaks, it is done; when He commands it stands fast. He is the Creator of the ends of the earth, and faints not though the whole burden of sustaining the universe rests upon His shoulders. Mountains are as the small dust which gathers on the scales, and does not affect the weights, and islands in His estimate are very little things.

He is Almighty in the realm of moral beings. Demons cannot withstand His authority; when He bids them, they must go forth. He does according to His will, to quote the words of one of the greatest conquerors the world has ever known, "among the armies of heaven." Even though He never invades the soul of man unbidden, and though men account themselves free agents and plot against His will, though the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, they only do whatsoever His counsel and His hand determined beforehand should be done. It is a great mystery that it should be so, but without doubt so it is (Acts iv. 28).

This Almighty strength is within our reach, if we are willing to avail ourselves of it. Isaiah says that "they who wait on the Lord renew (*Heb.* "change"), their strength;" and the whole history of the Bible tells of men who did so. Abraham as the years passed changed his ideal of strength from Ishmael with his Arab-blood to Isaac, patient, yielding, passing through death to resurrection. Moses changed his strength from that of the swift, powerful athlete, who with one blow felled the tyrant to the ground, to the strength which is derived from fellowship with the I AM. Peter changed his strength from that of self-assertion to that of the Spirit of Pentecost. It is even recorded of our Lord that though He was crucified in weakness, He liveth by (*Greek*, "out of") the power of God (2 Cor. xiii. 4).

Have we all learnt the lesson? The youths faint and are weary, and the young men utterly fall; but the everlasting God (*El*, "the Strong"), the Lord (*Jehovah*) fainteth not, neither is weary; and "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, He increaseth strength." Then they mount up with wings as eagles, they run without being weary, they walk and do not faint.

Why not henceforth begin to mount up, to

run, to walk in the strength which faith may derive from the Almighty? "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." "And He said, O man, greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when He had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my Lord speak; for Thou hast strengthened me."

You have tried to bear a crushing sorrow in your own strength, to love back some wayward heart, to redeem wasted years, to repair breaches that yawn in the Temple of your soul. All has been unavailing: but will you not learn henceforth to let in the Almighty Love, which bears, believes, hopes, endures all things, and never faileth. What your love cannot do, His can. Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge shall vanish away, but love abideth, for love is Lord of all.

You have tried to vanquish some besetting sin, but in vain. The old Adam has been too strong for young Melancthon. Notwithstanding protestations and resolutions, vows and prayers, the strong man armed has repressed all attempts at revolt and kept his place. But why not cry out to the Stronger than the Strong? All the power

of God is resident in Jesus Christ. He is the Power of God. To Him are entrusted the keys of the Unseen. He shall succour you, though most weak and helpless. He will hold the door against your strong adversary and make you more than a conqueror, giving you warrant indeed to say, "*I believe in God the Father Almighty.*"

IV

"Maker of Heaven and Earth"

On the shores of Indian seas, the traveller may sometimes come across one of the most exquisite productions of Nature. It is a kind of chalice, called Neptune's cup, which has been built up by myriads of polypi. First they constructed the base, then the slender stem, and finally the cup-like pinnacle. There are not only an evident plan and purpose, but exquisite beauty in that crystal cup; and beauty is surely the attribute and product of a mind like our own, only infinitely richer and more refined.

What if this world with its sun and sister-worlds constitutes a Neptune's flower on the shores of the Universe! As there is incontrovertible evidence of the thought of a thinker, and the plan of an architect in the one, so much more in the other. The beauty of the world, of its nights and mornings, its rainbows and flowers, its waterfalls and dells, its babes and children, is a sufficient warrant for our affirmation, *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and*

Earth. Everywhere there are traces of the Love of the Father, and the Power of the Almighty.

John Stuart Mill tells us that if we want to prove the existence of God, we shall do well to hold fast to the argument of the evident plan which pervades creation ; and the only thing that Matthew Arnold had to say against it was that he had had no experience of world-building. But if some Indian were to travel to our country, and see our railway stations, our locomotives, and electric trams, he would not say, " I have had no experience of such things, and therefore I suppose they grew up by chance." He would be more likely to say, " There was a path to my native hut, but it was not cut out of the forest without forethought ; there was only one tiny room in my wigwam, but it was the result of planning and labour ; my only weapons were the arrows that I carefully sharpened on the stone, but they required the utmost thought and care, or they had never sufficed to bring down the big game ; and therefore all these wonderful things which I see about me must be due to an intelligence, akin to but infinitely superior to mine or my forefather's."

Where there is a plan, such as is evident in the mechanism of heaven and earth, and in the

adaptation of our nature to appreciate and enjoy them, there must be an idea; where there is an idea, there must be a purpose; where a purpose, there thought; where thought, a Thinker, and so you get back to the same conclusion as before when arguing from the existence of Force.

Take, for instance, the mechanism of the eye—the retina and the iris, the crystalline lens and vitreous humour, the variety of muscles by which it is focussed and adjusted. What a vast number of minute and exacting conditions must be fulfilled, before there can be perfect and unblurred vision. It is impossible to believe that this intricate and beautiful mechanism can have been due to the fortuitous concourse of atoms, or to the power of human volition. It must have been due to an intelligent Being who created the eye and light to match it, the ear and sound to match it, the nostril and fragrant scents to match it, the heart and love to match it, the spirit and truth to match it, and when it is asked, what is His Name, there is but one answer, "*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.*"

Two concluding thoughts demand expression. First what is our attitude towards this Almighty and Personal God, who thinks and wills, who

loves and plans? Daniel Webster, the profound American philosopher, was asked on one occasion, what was the greatest thought that he had ever conceived, and he replied, "The greatest thought, gentlemen, that I have ever conceived is the consciousness of my personal responsibility to a personal God;" and he arose and left the room. The company that was gathered around his table, were for a little while absolutely silent, every soul was filled with astonishment at the magnificence of the reply. It seemed wonderful to hear such a statement from such a man. Yet, I suppose that the most marvellous thing that any of us carries in his heart is the Urim and Thummim stone of conscience, which sparkles with the Truth and darkens with Falsehood. What has been our response to our Maker? "It is He that hath made us, and we are His. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." Have we acted thus? Is this our attitude towards Him? If not, the Door of Christ's mediation stands open for us. "No one cometh unto the Father," He says, "except by Me."

Lastly, do we realize that He who made the heavens and the earth is willing to fashion us according to His perfect plan? It is easier to make worlds than men; to fashion stars and

flowers than souls. Yet let us put ourselves before Him saying, "But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay and Thou our potter; and we are all the work of Thy hands. Maker of Heaven and Earth, make me!

V

"I Believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord"

THIS is the creed of St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, of Savonarola and Huss, of Luther and Melancthon, of Wycliffe and Knox, but long before its majestic sentences were formulated, its substance, and especially this clause, was steadfastly believed.

"*I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.*" It is the voice of *John the Baptist*, who said: "I saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and it abode upon Him, and I saw and bare witness that this is the Son of God."

"*I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.*" It is the voice of the guileless *Nathanael*, whose heart was read, as he sat beneath his favourite sycamore, and who acknowledged that Jesus of Nazareth was "King of Israel and Son of God."

"*I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.*" It is the voice of *Thomas*, who loved even to death, but could not believe, but who, as he

4—(25:6)

saw the marks of the wounds, was convinced of the omniscience of the Risen Saviour, and was compelled to exclaim, "My Lord and my God."

"*I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.*" It is the voice of Peter, to whom it had been revealed, not by flesh and blood, but by the Father Himself, that Jesus was the Christ, "the Son of the living God."

"*I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.*" It is the voice of John, the Beloved Apostle, who leant on the bosom of the Lord in tenderest fellowship, and said: "We have an understanding to know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ."

But the wish is sometimes expressed for the evidence of a man of absolute integrity and finely balanced mind, who should investigate the claims of Christ, as it might be investigated by a committee of experts. If such an one could have lived in that distant first century, and left his opinion to be opened by us to-day, and if it corroborated the Creed—how reassuring and strengthening to our faith! But there is on record just such a verdict. There was a young man, who was a student in the great University at Jerusalem, during the time when Jesus of

Nazareth was working His wonderful miracles, and who afterwards became a member of the High Council. He knew everything that could be said by the enemies of Christ in opposition to His claims, because he was the close friend of Annas and Caiaphas; indeed, he made it the object of the opening years of his brilliant career to extirpate the nascent religion which was known as the "Way" of the Crucified. He met the followers of Christ in debate, put them to the torture, breathed out threatenings and slaughter, which he executed even in strange and distant cities. So far from being prejudiced in favour of Christianity, he was strongly antagonistic to it; but notwithstanding all, he became so convinced of the undeniable claims of Jesus of Nazareth, that he turned completely round, and lived to be the chief Apostle of His Divine Sonship. Though he knew all that could be said against this doctrine, he embraced and preached it, with his wide, logical, and practical mind, meeting inveterate opposition, sacrificing every advantage which birth and position could confer, and affirming always that the life which he lived in the flesh was a life of faith on the Son of God, who, as he said, "loved me and gave Himself for me."

His opinions are contained in his letters, which

are preserved in our Scriptures, and have influenced the foremost minds of every age. Rénan, Strauss, and Baur, though they do not class themselves as Christian disciples, admit that the four first Epistles of the New Testament were written by Paul, before the year A.D. 60, that is, 27 years after the Resurrection, and upon those pages we find the definite and repeated statement of the former opponent of Christianity, that its Founder most certainly lived, died, rose again, and was the only begotten Son of the Father, who was "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

VI

"I Believe . . . in Jesus"

It is not often that this Name of our Lord stands alone in the Epistles, but it is, of course, very frequent in the Gospels. Indeed, there, it is His ordinary appellation. Given Him by the angel who announced His birth, it was the name by which His mother and sisters addressed Him, and was familiar throughout the mountain village, where He dwelt for 30 years. In their simplicity the Evangelists use this word almost constantly, without preceding it by *Lord*, or following it by *Christ*, but uttering it in its unadorned humility.

It declares distinctly the human nature of our Lord, and is fragrant of Nazareth, nestling in its quiet nook apart from the great life of Rome or Greece, and recalls the carpenter's home with its humble circumstances and humble fare. It suggests the thirst at the well-head, and the hunger in the early morning which searched the fig tree, the weariness that made Him sleep amid the storm, the loneliness that suffered without the gate, the thoughtful kindness that spread the breakfast amid the haze of early dawn when the

silver ripples broke at His feet, and how He ascended in a truly human form. "This same Jesus," the angels said, "shall come again." It was Jesus whom Stephen saw standing on the right hand of God. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," was the arresting word to Saul on his way to Damascus. It is in the name of Jesus, the Son of Man, that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess allegiance, and it is Jesus who sends His angels through the ages, to tell His servants the things that must shortly be done. In every passage where the name Jesus stands alone, emphasis is meant to be laid upon the human aspect of His wonderful character.

But there is more in it than this. When the angel gave it to His parents He accompanied it with the explanation that He should be called Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. The full significance of this sweet appellation is seen in the original as we have it in "Joshua," of which it is the shortened form, and which is really Yeho-shua, meaning Jehovah the Saviour. Whenever we utter this title for the Son of God our Saviour, we use that mystic wonderful word that Moses heard at the burning bush, and which for ages no Jew dare repeat—JEHOVAH.

"*Jehovah*" carries in its very heart the message of salvation, for its announcement to Moses was accompanied with the declaration "I am come down to deliver them." The redeeming saving aspect of the Divine Nature was always prominent in that great Name, but its reference is made still clearer by the addition of the word *that saves*. Jesus saves His people, not only from the guilt but from the power of sin. By the infusion of His own nature into their hearts He undermines their love of sin, sets shuttles working which weave the white garments of a pure and holy character, teaches us to hate what we once loved, and to love much that was foreign and distasteful. Those who open their hearts to the spirit of "Jesus" live in this world with the solar light in their hearts, gracious words on their lips, are like the dew of the Eastern morning refreshing the thirsty herbage, and go to and fro amongst men performing beneficent and celestial service. Not only are they delivered from sin's tyranny, but with deft hands they minister to men, stooping as good Samaritans over wounded and pillaged travellers, to whom they minister of the wine of the life-blood of their Lord, and the oil of the grace of His Spirit.

Once more, this Name, which the greatest

hymnists have set to inimitable verse, which has inspired a Bernard, a Zinzendorf, a Guyon, a Cowper, and a Havergal, which is the first word that mothers teach their children, and the last word that dying saints breathe as they pass Time's threshold—sets forth the human side of God's character, and reveals features of His transcendent nature which must always have been present. We no longer dread the great God, or shrink before the light of the jasper throne, for in the midst of it is the form of a man, and we understand that He who lived in Nazareth and Palestine is the reflection in our human existence of qualities which are as integral to the Almighty as Omnipotence itself.

VII

"I Believe on . . . Christ"

CHRIST is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah*, and of each *Anointed* is the English rendering. There is evident reference to the ancient Hebrew custom of anointing with oil Priests, Prophets and Kings.

Our Lord was not only the Son of the Virgin Mother according to the flesh, and the Son of God in virtue of His eternal union with the Deity. He was also the one white flower of the Hebrew race, the fulfilment of its ideal, the gathering up of all the points and suggestions contained in Hebrew life, during long centuries of preparation, the Man of whom the greatest men of Judaism were only fragments. All that was sweetest, noblest and best in Joseph, Moses, David, Jeremiah, met in Him in exquisite harmony and proportion. Of Him poets had sung; to Him seers had borne testimony; a long line of priests had set forth one side of His glorious nature; an unbroken descent of kings, another; all these concurrent streams poured their floods into the great reservoir of His nature. This is the inner

meaning of the genealogy of Matthew in which he shows the line of descent of whom was born Jesus, who is called CHRIST.

His *anointing* took place at the waters of baptism, when the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended upon Him. Thereafter it was competent for Him to say, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me." In after days the Apostles spoke of God's holy Servant, "whom Thou didst anoint" (Acts iv. 27; x. 38). In the old dispensation it was prescribed that when any offered an oblation of a meal offering, it should be of fine flour on which oil and frankincense were placed (see Lev. ii.). How precisely the type was realized in the Christ! His manhood was even and pure as fine flour; it was fragrant with aromatic spice and anointed with fresh oil. Throughout His life He was a sweet savour sacrifice, holy and acceptable and well-pleasing unto God.

Christ is for the most part used as another Name for our Saviour, but indeed it is rather the designation of an office. When we use it we are justified in placing "the" before it. Herod demanded "where *the* Christ should be born"; Simon Peter said, "Thou art *the* Christ;" the chief priests mocking said, "Let *the* Christ, the

King of Israel, descend from the cross" ;—"If this is *the* Christ of God His chosen, let Him save Himself."

We believe that Jesus is the Christ because He so exactly fulfils the whole Levitical dispensation. The prophets had foretold that the Messiah should be God and Man; exalted and debased; the Ancient of Days and a babe of a span long; the Almighty, but dependent upon a woman's care; Master and Servant; Priest and Victim; King and Subject; Mortal, but the Conqueror of Death; anointed with the oil of Joy, but a Man of Griefs; acquainted with the woes of men, and the Fellow of the Almighty. So complex were the wards of the lock that no key has been found which would perfectly meet their demand until He came who fulfils in His Person every one of these apparent contradictions.

Without hesitation our Lord challenged the erudite scholars of His time who were versed in Old Testament scriptures to deny the validity of His title. They had thought of only one side of the ancient prophecies, those that depicted the Messiah as a Conquering King. He insisted that there was another side which could only be fulfilled by one who had trodden the path of humiliation and suffering. "O fools," He said, "and slow

of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?"

It is because our Lord exactly realises the complex conception of the Messiah yielded by the Old Testament, that the Christian Church is able to affirm its belief in Him as the Christ.

VIII

"I Believe in . . . His only Son"

WRITING from St. Leonard's in 1857, Charles Kingsley said, "No difficult texts shall rob me of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. In Him I find a counterpart of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being, in Him I worship the abysmal God." In this faith he lived and died. When he lay dying at Eversley Rectory, his wife apparently dying in another chamber, he exclaimed, with the light of eternity on his face, "Only in the faith of Jesus Christ, as Son of God, can the most educated and the simplest find peace." "And so," in the words of Mrs. Kingsley, "he passed into the unseen, a noble, unabashed, and true knight of Jesus, affirming his belief in Jesus Christ, His only Son."

All who believe in Christ are *sons*. Because we are such, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father" (see Gal. vi. 1-7). But our sonship is separated by an infinite chasm from the Sonship of Jesus. Peter was right in his great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the *Son* of the living God." We are

sons, He is *the* Son ; we are born again, He is the "Only Begotten Son." Those who lived with Him during His earthly life beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, and it was because He was the only begotten Son which was in the bosom of the Father that He was able to declare Him (see John i. 14-18 ; iii. 16-18 ; 1 John iv. 9).

All that is meant in the unique relationship of the Son of the Father it is impossible for mortal man to know or say. But when we utter the sublime definition of God's nature, "God is Love," it follows of necessity that from all eternity there must have been one to love and one to be loved, and a spirit of love uniting these twain. It would seem as if the doctrine of the Trinity were implicated whenever we think of God as Eternal Love. It has always been true that the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world, that the Son has loved the Father even to the laying down of His life, and that the blessed Spirit has been the Eternal Spirit, because He also is Love (John xvii. 24 ; xiv. 31 ; Heb. ix. 14).

Our Lord was deeply conscious of His Divine Sonship. How far He had understood its entire significance during His early years we cannot tell, but from the moment the Voice of God through

the open sky, declared Him as His beloved Son there was no doubt or hesitancy. He said that God was *His own* Father, making Himself equal with God (John v. 18). He said that no one knew the Father save the Son (Matt. xi. 27). When surrounded by His foes He did not hesitate to claim Sonship in a special sense even to unity (John x. 33-38). We cannot read the marvellous prayer of John xvii. without realizing that He felt His Sonship to be unique and eternal. It is because of His own deep consciousness of this relationship that we profess our belief in the only begotten Son.

The Apostle affirms that the truth of this affirmation was declared with power at His resurrection (Rom. i. 4), and more than once quotes Psa. ii. 7 as being realized when the First-born was brought into the world (Acts iii. 13; Heb. i. 5, 6). Therefore we need have no hesitation in addressing Him in the majestic words of the ancient psalm, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom."

IX

"I Believe in Jesus Christ our Lord"

It was this item in the Creed that aroused the deepest hostility of the Roman Emperors. They were liberal enough in permitting all the nations they subdued to worship their gods, and to put their images in the Pantheon, but they persecuted Christianity to the death, because, with true insight, they perceived that the Founder of Christianity asserted a royalty over His followers which they acknowledged as superior to the imperial sovereignty. If He might have been relegated to a secondary position, there would have been no grounds for persecution, but it was because that other King, one Jesus, claimed to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords, that every effort was made to exterminate the new religion.

There is, therefore, no position which our Lord can take with any one of us except as Lord, and it is because so few give Him His true position, and place the government upon His shoulder, that His Kingdom is so slow in coming, and He is so limited in His power to bless.

There is no doubt a phase of religion which is as much richer in its experience than that which is commonly enjoyed amongst Christians, as the sky of the tropics is bluer than the leaden atmosphere of our northern climate. Take, for instance, the testimony of Billy Bray, the Cornish Miner, who said: "The Lord made me so happy that I cannot express what I felt. I shouted for joy; I praised God with my whole heart. . . . I think this was in November, 1823, but what day of the month I do not know. I remember this, that everything looked new to me—the people, the fields, the cattle, the trees. I was like a new man in a new world. I spent the greater part of time praising the Lord."

Or take the testimony of John Bunyan, who describes his experience thus: "Now could I see myself in heaven and earth at once; in heaven by my Christ, by my Head, by my Righteousness and Life, though on earth by my body and person. Christ was a precious Christ to myself that night, I could scarcely lie in my bed for joy and peace and triumph through Christ."

Or take the experience of the wife of Jonathan Edwards in these fragrant and inspiring words: "When I arose on the morning of the Sabbath, I felt a love to all mankind wholly peculiar in its

strength of sweetness, far beyond all that I have ever felt before. The power of that love seemed inexpressible. I thought if I were surrounded by enemies who were venting their malice and cruelty upon me, it would still be impossible that I should cherish any feelings towards them but those of love and pity, and ardent desires for their happiness."

It is said also of Colonel Gardiner by a friend, that he was cured of impurity in a single hour: "So soon as he was enlightened from above, he felt the power of the Holy Ghost changing his nature so wonderfully that all desire and inclination were removed as entirely as if he had been a sucking child, nor did they return."

These testimonies might be greatly multiplied, but in each case it could be shown that they arose when the soul took Christ to be not only its Saviour but its Lord. May this not have been the cause of our failure? We have looked at the wounds of Christ for cleansing, but have not remembered that the Victim of the Cross was Master and Lord. There has been no triumphal procession through the thoroughfares of our souls; no coronation in the secret fane of our hearts; no definite surrender of the keys of government, the symbols of authority, into His hands;

because this has not been done—because we have been more anxious to secure our salvation than to give Him His rights; because we have not trusted Him with absolute devotion, we have missed the joy, the peace, the deliverance from the power of sin, the baptism of perfected love, and the fortitude of spirit which others enjoy. But directly we hand over the empire, *and believe that He accepts it* (and He does accept it so soon as we surrender it) all these will begin to be our own. There will be an illumination throughout the dark regions of the inner life, banners, acclamations, shouts of joy! "Rejoice, thy King cometh, having salvation."

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. x. 9, R.V.) "For this cause Christ died, and lived again, that He might be Lord" (Rom. xiv. 9). "I give you to understand that no man can say Jesus is Lord but in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 3).

X

"Conceived by the Holy Ghost"

THE miraculous conception and birth of our Lord has been sometimes assailed, because it is alleged that it is not borne out by the references made to it in other parts of Scripture, and specially in the Gospels themselves. But surely this assertion cannot be sustained.

In the archaic record of *Genesis*, it was foretold that *the seed of the Woman* should bruise the serpent's head, and the expression is so remarkable as even then it foreshadowed some such event as actually occurred. *The Fourth Evangelist*, in his sublime Prologue, clearly enough defines the miraculous origin of Christ, when He says, "The Word was made Flesh." On the assumption that Jesus descended naturally from Joseph and Mary, he would surely have said, "The Word came in the flesh." That the Word of the Eternal should have taken on Himself our nature clearly involves the creative Act of the Holy Spirit. *The Apostle Paul* undoubtedly refers to the same fact, when he says that "the Second Man" is *the Lord from Heaven*, in contrast to

"the First Man," who is of the earth earthy; and when he says again, that our Lord was *made of a woman.*

When the fulness of the time arrived, a new vital principle appeared. And it was as much due to the creative work of God as the mystery of Regeneration. He that works in our hearts, implanting the incorruptible seed of the new and heavenly life which constitutes us sons of God, wrought in the very depths of human nature, as represented by Mary, and thus that Holy Thing could be born of her, which we know as "the Son of God."

The most casual acquaintance with the gospels is sufficient to prove that they portray a unique Personality. Christ was the white flower of our race, revealing itself on a stock which was dark and ugly, exhaling the rarest fragrance, and prolific in healing influences; but this was the marvel of it that notwithstanding His profound humility, there was no consciousness of sin. All others, who have attained superlative excellence, have prostrated themselves in lowliest self-abasement in the presence of God, confessing themselves unclean, but in the hours of most radiant fellowship with the Divine, there is no confession on His lips, because He is without sin. In the glad

certainty that none can meet His challenge, He cries, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?"

But how can we account for this closeness of identification with our race on the one hand, coupled with this apartness on the other, unless we accept the teaching of His Immaculate Conception? He was not born of the will of man, but of the will of God, and was therefore wholly pure from sin. Anselm in his *Cur Deus Homo* mentions the four methods in which God can make man; by the law of natural generation, or as He made Adam, or as He made Eve, or as our Lord was made in secret and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. As the first man originated, without father and without mother, from the creative energy of God, which spiritualized the dust of the earth, so did the Second Man originate without father by that effectual power of the most High, which spiritualized humanity.

It may be that the mystery would seem less remote did we know more of the laws of birth among the very lowest forms of life, where the ordinary law of generation seems suspended. Why should not the highest revert to and touch the lowest, as a perfect ring, worn on the Creator's finger!

In any case those who have accepted the first

statement of Genesis, "In the Beginning God created," may be at perfect rest in the presence of this other great mystery and assert their belief that Jesus *was Conceived by the Holy Ghost.* Oh, Spirit of Generation, *Re*-generate us!

XI

"Born of the Virgin Mary"

WHAT a moment of transcendent joy was that when Mary bore her Son! What though the surroundings of His birth were the rudest and humblest possible, that the stall provided the chamber, and the manger the cradle, whilst the beasts moved restlessly at their halters! Hers was the joy of bearing a Child on whom the light of prophecy was focussed! A woman's joy when a man-child is born into the world was in her case mingled with the memory of the words of the Angel Gabriel, spoken at the Annunciation, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end." Could she forget those words spoken but nine months before, when her cousin accosted her as blessed amongst women, and as the Mother of the Lord? and surely she had also been informed of the word of Zacharias, who had compared her

Child to the Dayspring from on high that visits the world with general illumination.

All her highest hopes were realised, and the confirmation was given to them, when, presently, the wise men from the East obtained admission to their humble dwelling-place, and presented Joseph and herself with costly gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and when the shepherds came, telling of the wonderful vision of angels, and went forth glorifying and praising God. A further corroboration had been given her when she presented her Child in the Temple, and was greeted by the prophetess Anna, who, when she saw the Child, gave thanks unto God, and spoke of Him as being connected with the redemption for which she and many were looking.

It also confirmed her high hopes when the aged Simeon took the Child in his arms, and blessed God that he had lived to see His salvation—the Light of the Gentiles, and the Glory of Israel. But what did the old man mean when, looking steadily at her, he said, " Yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul " ? She could not forget his significant look, or those warning words. Whenever she thought of them she gave an involuntary shudder. What lay hidden for her Boy in the dim future which should make His

life a stepping-stone and a stumbling-block for many in Israel, and a sign which should be spoken against ? She did not, and could not, understand these words ; they came back upon her frequently as a breath of coming autumn in the midst of a radiant summer day.

XII

"Born . . . Suffered"

"THE Child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and with the grace of God." Everything that could make child-life beautiful clustered in His character. Unusual moral beauty and intellectual faculty, modesty, humility and sweetness of disposition characterised His young life, as it unfolded in the gentle atmosphere of the carpenter's home; and perhaps in the ecstasy of her motherly affection Mary almost forgot the sinister shadow which had for a moment darkened her soul.

From the time, however, of His first visit to Jerusalem, it seemed as though a new conception of life was breaking upon Him, as though another authority was being recognised, as though He were about to yield obedience to another voice. The same thought was accentuated when eighteen years after they sat together at the Marriage Feast at Cana, and in the tenderest manner He taught her that there were limits to the authority which her earthly relationship had permitted her.

On two other occasions Jesus spoke to her.

Once He refused to give up the work in which He was engaged at her call; and again, when a woman in the crowd, touched by His inimitable loveliness, magnified the mother that bore Him, He gently corrected her by saying that there was an even higher relationship for those who heard God's Word and did it. It was as though He anticipated the superstition and reverence which in following centuries would gather around her name, and indicated that in the Kingdom of Heaven position was reached, not by adventitious circumstances, but by those qualities of heart and soul which may be acquired by all.

In these days it is most important to remember this. When asked to worship Mary, to pray to her as our Lord's mother, to entreat her to exert influence upon her Son, let us remember with what strong emphasis He put aside the exercise of all motherly control, and said, in effect, that she stood only on the level of the other disciples, and that her position, like their's, would be entirely determined by their attitude toward the will of God.

XIII

"Suffered"

He suffered in every limb, muscle, and tendon of His body. The thorns of His crown were encrimsoned; His pallid face was worn by watching and sorrow; the old purple garment, brought from some press in the guards'-room, and flung around His shoulders in mockery, was saturated in blood from the wounds which were deeply scored upon His back. The victim was often known to fall fainting or dying beneath the blows of the heavy thong loaded with lead. Thus He suffered under Pontius Pilate in every part of His *physical* nature.

He was suffering *loneliness*. His delight had always been with the sons of men. He had never been so happy as when the publicans and sinners drew near, women ministered to Him, and children clustered to His knee. He sought the companionship of His friends in the house of mourning, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and in the Garden of His anguish. But there was no one with Him now. Lover and friend stood apart. His disciples had forsaken Him. No one understood,

except perhaps Mary of Bethany, and she only to a limited extent, the sublime purpose and programme which He came to realise. As He looked round on that sea of upturned faces, there was no one that looked back to Him with the kindling glance with which spirit recognises spirit.

He was suffering alone because so absolutely *misunderstood*. No one ever came towards His fellows with heart so big and overflowing with desire to bless, as when He stepped out of the Infinite, desiring at any cost to Himself to make the earth smile like Eden on the morning of Creation. He would not have reckoned the pain, but have cheerfully given tears, sweat of blood, and death-agony, if only those for whom He expended Himself had understood. We reck not the cost of pain if only those for whom we suffer gave us credit for the nobility of our purpose, but the bitterest ingredient in our Lord's cup was that He came to His own, and His own received Him not, His aims and purposes were misunderstood. He was called a liar, and a ring-leader of sedition; subjected to slander and hate.

He suffered keenly also as a *patriot*. With prophetic vision He beheld the lowering clouds gathering over the doomed city, and the eagles circling in the air, until the carcase was ready.

The cry of the mothers of Jerusalem was even now ringing in His ear, as they beheld their children flung from spear to spear by the Roman soldiery. He could see the dread circle of crosses environing the city walls, until there was no more wood to make them—each cross bearing its sufferer. To anticipate such a fate for the city of David, the joy of the whole earth, consecrated by holy memories from the days of Abraham, plunged a sword into His spirit, that pierced it to the quick.

But, especially He suffered as the *Saviour*. The sins of all the world were made to meet in Him, as if from every heart, confluent streams of guilt poured their black tides into His heart. He stood for the race. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. As the Lamb of God He was bearing the sins of the world. "He was once offered to bear the sin of many." "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to His own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

His suffering unto death was not incidental to

His career, but His main purpose and aim. Others die because they were born; He was born that He might die. He was the Lamb slain from all eternity in the purpose of the Father, and it was necessary that He should realise that purpose in experience and fact, learning obedience by the things that He suffered, becoming a merciful and faithful High Priest that He might succour those who suffer being tempted, and that by His suffering unto death He might present a perfect oblation, sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. We may not understand the philosophy of this great fact which lies at the root of God's dealings with our race, and perhaps with the universe, but we may bind the comfort of it to our hearts as we say, "He suffered the just for the unjust and to bring us to God."

XIV

"Suffered under Pontius Pilate"

PONTIUS PILATE! What a cluster of association gathers round that name! The Roman Procurator, Cæsar's representative, the special selection of the Emperor Tiberias, because his relentless temper seemed to fit him to cope with the Jewish people. His rule was as devoid of mercy as it was of justice. Venality, violence, and robbery, malicious insults, and judicial murders without even the formality of trial, bloodthirsty cruelty which mingled the blood of the sacrificers with the blood of the victims they sacrificed—such was the dark and terrible record of his three years' reign!

Former governors to some extent had respected the religious scruples of the Jews. They even removed the Emperor's image from the Roman standards before marching their soldiers into Jerusalem, so as to avoid the semblance of worshipping Cæsar; but Pilate ignored the most sacred feelings of the Hebrew race, and forced upon them the hated emblem. It was before such a man that "Jesus Christ witnessed the good

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confession." To this fact the heathen historian Tacitus bears unhesitating witness.

It is probable, since his wife was with him, that on this occasion the Governor was occupying, not the fortress of Antonia, but the magnificent palace built by Herod the Great at the north-western angle of the Upper City. It was thither, about six o'clock in the morning of the most fateful day of Pilate's life that the Jewish leaders brought the bound Christ.

He was not wholly ignorant of the motives by which they were actuated. "He knew that for envy they had delivered Him up." It is probable, also, that between the granting of the Roman guard on the previous evening and the morning appearance of accusers and accused, he had had a profound talk with his wife *Procula*, who is described in one Apocryphal Gospel as a convert to Judaism, and at least had a tolerably accurate knowledge of the Person and Claims of Jesus. This probably accounts for the strange reluctance which, at the beginning of the trial, made him so unwilling to proceed, and withheld him from having anything to do with that "just man."

Pilate stands on the plains of time, as Lot's wife stood on those of Sodom—a warning in stone to those who know what they ought to do, and

try to do it, not straightforwardly, but obliquely, not by meeting high-handed wrong with a resolute front, but by cajoling it, and fencing with its malicious demands. They say, Don't do thus and thus, it is inexpedient, here is a wiser course, let us advise you for your good to follow it : but in saying this, they desert the one impregnable fortress against which the gates of hell cannot prevail ! Christ had never been crucified under Pontius Pilate, if at the first enunciation of their clamorous demands, like Gallio afterwards, he had driven the Jewish leaders from his judgment seat, indignant at their suggestion to soil Roman Justice with so base a crime.

He assured himself that this King of the Jews meditated no treason against his Imperial master. He seemed to be a visionary, a dreamer of dreams, a brainless fanatic, at the worst. From this private inquiry he returned to the Jews, whose passion was rising swiftly with every hour's delay, with the verdict, sustained by every evidence of truth, " I find in him no fault at all."

Then the full fury of the pitiless storm surged up to his feet, and broke over him. Hell was let loose ! He sent the prisoner bound to Herod— but why bound ! He placed Jesus and Barabbas side by side in the vain hope that rather than

have the criminal let loose among them, they would demand the release of Jesus! He tried to appeal to their pity by submitting their victim to the awfully cruel torture of scourging—surely that would be penalty enough! He expostulated, reasoned, and appealed. The more he opposed the popular frenzy, the more vehement it grew.

The Lord never hesitated to bear witness. To the Truth, to His own Divine Nature, and to the only absolute source of Power, He bore unflinching testimony. He was by royal pre-eminence "the faithful martyr" (Rev. i., *see Greek*): but in bitter contrast, Pilate, who paltered with truth, ultimately denied it, and finally drifted into doing the very deed which even his black soul loathed. "Go, soldier," said he, in the usual language of the criminal court, "fetch a cross." And thus it came to pass that our Lord "suffered under Pontius Pilate."

XV

"Crucified!"

It was a terrible form of death, which had become fearfully common throughout the Roman Empire. The Cross stood for the maximum of lingering torture, indignity, and shame which man could inflict upon his fellow. It was invented by the Phœnicians, but Rome from the time of Cæsar adopted and improved on it.

Dr. Edersheim tells us that three kinds of cross were in use: the so-called St. Andrew's Cross, like an X, the Cross in the form of a T, and the ordinary Latin Cross. It was on the latter that the God-Man was crucified. His agony on the Tree rendered that form of death no longer shameful, but has made the Cross the symbol of love and mercy, of humanity and civilization.

Golgotha derived its name from its skull-like appearance. Thus we speak of the *brow* of a hill. It stood two or three minutes aside from the high road, with a sudden depression beneath, as if the jaws of the skull had opened. Thither Christ bore His cross, accompanied by four soldiers, and preceded by the centurion in command.

The weight of the cross was too heavy, however, for that frail body, which had yielded sweat and blood the night before, had been unrefreshed by food or sleep, and bore upon it the deep furrows of recent scourging. Small wonder that the pity of the daughters of Jerusalem was moved! Before many steps had been taken, the heavy beam had to be transferred to Simon of Cyrene, and perhaps Jesus needed to be Himself supported till the sad procession reached its scene of execution "outside the city wall."

We dare not harrow the feelings which Christianity has made so sensitive by narrating in detail the harrowing incidents that followed. It is enough to mention the nails, the erection of the cross, the weight of the body, the shame, the fever, the rigour, the inability to move. We turn away our eyes! We cannot endure to look! But remember He was held there not by iron bands or soldier cohorts, but of His own choice. No man could take His life from Him. He had power to lay it down, and power to take it again. The love of *man* constrained Him!

The cross was not high, probably "those blessed feet" were but one or two feet from the ground. Above His head the title, written perhaps by Pilate's own hand: on the ground beneath, the

soldiers dicing for his clothes: on either side a malefactor: quite near a group of women and disciples who loved Him better than themselves: an outer ring of Israel's leaders, jeering, taunting, and wagging their heads: all around the roar of the crowds, of the scum and refuse of Jerusalem, attracted to the sickening spectacle. And thus from nine in the early morning for three long, weary hours, till, at midday, midnight suddenly supervened.

He thought of the soldiers and prayed that they might be forgiven: gave comfort to the dying penitent beside Him: made provision for the mother that bare Him: and whose heart was pierced by the sharp sword of unutterable suffering. Then the World's Redeemer girded Himself to meet to the full measure the bitterness of death, the death of the Substitute, of the supreme Sacrifice, of the Accursed. It is written, "Cursed be every one that hangeth on a tree," and in fulfilment of this prophecy He was therefore made a sin-offering and a curse for man.

No mortal eye may penetrate the shroud of darkness which hangs over those hours of more than mortal woe. It is enough to know that He gave His life a ransom for many, vanquished the last and greatest enemy of our race, and obtained

eternal redemption for us all. The cry of forsakenness uttered at three in the afternoon, marked the climax of that awful tragedy, which purchased a world's redemption; and the words "I thirst," as the expression of human need seemed to indicate that the more terrible aspect of spiritual anguish was over. He would not take the drug offered Him at the beginning, because He must suffer with full consciousness; but gladly accepted the vinegar which gave Him the physical vigour with which to meet the article of death.

The breaking light, not only of the sun, but of the Father's manifested love now broke on the Redeemer's soul, and its calm serenity is mirrored in "the Father" of conscious fellowship, with which He passed to the Joy that was set before Him. "He was crucified through weakness, and liveth by the Power of God."

XVI

"Dead"

"He became dead" (Rev. i. 18, R.V., *marg.*), *i.e.*, the Saviour chose to die and died because He would. From the Transfiguration Mountain He might have stepped into Paradise, by the open door through which Moses and Elijah had come, but to have done this would have been to leave man unredeemed. In the language of an old Christian hymn, it was not death which approached Christ, but Christ death: He died without death. He met it, not as conquered, but as a Conqueror. In the words of the Fourth Evangelist, "He bowed the Head and gave up the Spirit."

The accompaniments of His death were most remarkable. The earth was rent and the gates of the ancient graves were opened. And in the most Holy Place, the veil of the Temple was rent, and the secrets of the Most Holy Place stood revealed. In this connection it is interesting to notice that Josephus speaks of the mysterious extinction of one of the lights of the Golden Candlestick some forty years before the destruction of the Temple, and the Talmud narrates the

supernatural opening of the great Temple-gates. Is it not probable, therefore, that these may be corroboration of the Gospel statement as to the miraculous accompaniments of that wondrous death, which was indeed the death of Death, and the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

There was no doubt that He was dead. In response to the punctilious demand of the Jews, that the end of the sufferers should be hastened, and their bodies removed before nightfall from their crosses, a company of soldiers broke the bones of the two malefactors, but when they came to the cross of Jesus, they found that He was dead already, and so "a bone of Him" was "not broken." But the unbrokenness of His bones witnessed to the indubitable certainty that He was dead.

To make sure, however, one of the soldiers, with a lance "pierced His side," making so deep an incision that the risen Lord could challenge Thomas to thrust his hand into it.

From the riven side there came forth Blood and Water, not water only, but water and blood. It has been thought from this that our Lord literally died of a broken heart, because the sac or bag which contains the heart is always filled

with serous fluid, when the walls of the heart have burst under some excessive strain. If this were indeed the case, how beautifully it would illustrate the Psalmist's lament, " Reproach hath broken my heart." To how many, as they have looked on Him whom they pierced, has this spectacle been the dawn of a new hope. The water and blood have been " the double cure " of sin. By the blood we have been redeemed from sins of the deepest dye, by the water we are cleansed as in the laver of old. We could do without neither.

Dead ! Those eyes that wept with pity fast closed ! Those hands that touched blind eyes and leprous skins nerveless ! The door of those lips close-locked ! That tender heart broken ! The temple of His body in ruins ! The feet unable to stir from the cruel nail that held them together to the wood ! It was thus that men repaid the love of God. By wicked hands they crucified and slew the Prince of Life, who came to them, with eager pity, His hands filled with priceless gifts. But through that death the sad entail of Adam's sin was averted, and through the open portals of those wounds love has stepped out upon our world.

The death of Christ has a deep significance in

respect to the holiness of Christian character. It cut off from the outer world the Head and King of those who believe, and by union with Him those who are one with Him through a living faith and own Him King must reckon that they also are dead unto sin. Between the world that cast out their Master and themselves, stands His cross, so that it has no desire to come to them, nor do they desire to go to it. Only a heartless Queen could marry the murderer of her dead husband!

It is clear also that to all who are one with Christ, by the affinity of faith and love, that Death has robbed death of its terrors. To quote the old Latin sentence: "The death of death brought death to death by His death." When the moment of dissolution arrives, and the long union between soul and body must be broken, when we are summoned to that supreme exodus, we shall find that death has been abolished, that its victory and power have passed away—a moment's shadow, the gentle snapping of a silver cord, the unloosing of the shore-rope, and we shall find ourselves sailing out on a sunlit sea.

XVII

"And was Buried"

THE Sabbath Day was at hand, and that Sabbath was a high day because it linked the Sabbath rites with the ceremonial of the Passover. It was necessary, therefore, that whatever had to be done should be done at once, and God, to whom the dying Lord had committed His Spirit, cared for His Body also.

Mary had anticipated this hour when she came to anoint His Body for the burying. She alone, as is probable of all who gathered round His Sacred Person, had realized that His Death would be by violence, and that there would be no opportunity for women to perform the last offices of love. She hoped that the tenacious fragrance of the sweet spikenard would cling to His beloved Body, through all the scenes of anguish and shame, not only reminding Him of her love, but ensuring to Him the same tender regard as would have been His had He slept His last sleep in the Bethany home. But His Father was even more thoughtful of the Body of His Beloved. Let us not shrink from trusting God utterly with our

body as well as our soul, which may be sown in dishonour, but shall be raised in glory.

It had been predicted by the olden prophets that if His grave was made with the wicked, He should be with the rich in His death. And so it befel, for Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, a man of high character and great wealth, who had never ventured to confess the Master during his earthly life, and had given no indication of his affection, except that he had abstained from the vote of the Sanhedrin, hastened from the cross with its lifeless burden, and begged of Pilate that the dead body might be given to his care.

The Romans were indifferent to the fate of the body, and left it to the birds of the air, but Pilate readily assented to Joseph's request, and the more so, because his heart smote him for his own action in the earlier part of the day. He was moreover astonished that death had already taken place, and inquired of the centurion whether such were the fact.

Nicodemus, a man of enormous wealth, became his coadjutor ; the one purchased a long piece of fine linen, whilst the other spread it with myrrh and aloe-wood, and the two, with the help of others who were lingering near, bore the precious

casket from which the Divine-human spirit had passed, to rest in the new tomb, which Joseph had hewn out for himself in the solid rock.

The burial of Jesus has been the theme of matchless pictures, and we need not stay to paint the scene. But as strong and loving hands bear the body to the open grave, wrap the head in the white napkin, roll the limbs in fragrant linen, and lay the Body reverently on its rocky niche, we take one last look at all that was mortal of the immortal Saviour. With united strength the great stone is rolled upon the aperture as the last rays of the setting sun bathe the world. But this is not all. Though we see them not, angels sentinel the spot, and sit within the vault, shedding the radiance of heaven. It is but a little while, and the grave, rejoicing for but a brief spell in the victory, must surrender her spoils. This is He who leads captivity captive.

We cannot forget the repeated reference which the Apostles make to the burial of Christ. Paul says, "We were buried therefore with Him through baptism unto death"; and again, "Having been buried with Him in baptism." (Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12.)

In his view the grave of Christ had been transformed into a garden grotto in which each

redeemed disciple should quietly sit, remembering in the silence and solitude of the grave, how definite a barrier it made between Christ's earthly ministry, and that eternal priesthood which He exercises in the Unseen World. If it made so definite a break for Him, it surely can do no less for those who are the members of His Body, "of His Flesh and Bone."

Who need fear to lie in the Grave, since Christ has lain there? Why should we be anxious about our dust, since God was so careful of His Son's? We cannot be holden any more than He was. For us, too, the Day of Resurrection must come apace.

XVIII

"He Descended into Hell"

In his Pentecost sermon the Apostle Peter tells us, speaking of our Lord, that His soul was not left in Hell (Acts ii. 27, A.V.). In this he quoted Psalm xvi. 8, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." Clearly we must infer that Christ's soul must have entered the sombre precincts of the region, thus designated, or there would have been no thought of His being left there.

When the Authorised Version was made, the word *hell* had not acquired those dread associations which now gather around it. It meant simply "a covered place," "the dark hole into which a tailor might fling his waste shreds, or some shady nook hidden by leafy boughs." The translators used the word to render two Greek ones, *Hades* and *Gehenna*, and so the confusion of thought has become still more confounded.

There was a considerable difference in the mind of the Hebrew people between the places denoted by these two words. They had no idea that the

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world was round, and there was no necessity for Divine illumination on this point. God's Spirit does not inform us on matters which we are able to discover for ourselves. The chosen race was Divinely taught and inspired as to the Infinite and Eternal world which is concealed by but the thinnest veil of gauze, but their notions of cosmogony and astronomy were crude and elementary. They thought of the earth as a vast plain, floating through space as a broad leaf floats through the air, the upper side lit by the sun and inhabited by the living, the underside sunless and gloomy and reserved for the souls of those who have died. This underside was called *Hades*—the Unseen.

Therefore, we meet frequently with the threefold designation of "things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth" (Phil. ii. 10). And we are told that "He descended into the lower parts of the earth" (Eph. iv. 10). As you can only fill a vessel from the bottom upwards, so, says the Apostle, in the process of filling all things with His glorious Fulness, our Lord began at the very bottom. "Shout, ye lower parts of the earth, for the Lord hath done it." In this immense Kingdom of the Unseen, the disembodied spirits of the departed awaited

their final award, but not all under the same conditions; for Hades consisted of two provinces, Paradise and Gehenna. In one of our Lord's most memorable parables, we are told that Lazarus was borne to the bosom of Abraham, that is, in the Paradisaical world, whilst the rich man lifted his eyes from the torment of Gehenna.

The Revisers use our English word *hell* as the equivalent of *Gehenna*, leaving the word *Hades* wherever they find it. For instance, in our Lord's pathetic apostrophe to Capernaum, instead of the A.V., "Thou shalt be brought down to *Hell*," the R.V. gives the rendering, "Thou shalt be brought down to *Hades*;" *i.e.*, all the gay and busy crowds that now throng thy streets will soon have passed into the world of the Unseen, and will have no successors. Again, the old version of the memorable prediction of the stability of the Church ran thus, "The gates of *Hell* shall not prevail against it," but the latter version is the more accurate, which asserts that the Gates of *Hades*, *i.e.*, the principalities and power of the unseen world, from whatever quarter they may emanate, shall never overthrow the Church, which avows, as Peter did, the Divine Sonship.

When we recite this clause in the Creed, we therefore affirm our faith that He who was very

God of very God, not only conformed to the laws of our humanity in His Birth, but in His death also ; and that when His soul left the sacred body, which it had tenanted for three-and-thirty years, and which was not destined to see corruption, it went forth, clothed in that psychical body which it had woven for itself, to visit those further kingdoms which lie on the other side of this brief span of human existence.

On the one hand, He said to the dying thief, " This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise " ; whilst, on the other, the Apostle Peter tells us that being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, he went and preached unto the spirits in Prison, bearing them tidings of an accomplished salvation. The Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus adds that on entering Gehenna, our Lord took our forefather Adam by the hand, and said to the vast crowds of imprisoned spirits, " Come ye with me as many as have died through the tree which he touched, for behold I raise you up through the Tree of the Cross," so by the Cross as a bridge the inhabitants of Gehenna passed over into Paradise. But this is a legend only.

XIX

"He Descended into Hell, the Third Day He Rose Again from the Dead"

"THOU wilt not leave my soul in Hades"—with those words on His lips, our Lord breathed out His soul into the care of the Father. We are expressly told that when He had cried with a loud voice, saying, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit," He *gave up* His spirit. It was clearly a deliberate and voluntary act. He laid down His life of Himself, for this commandment and authority had been given Him of His Father (John x. 18). As man, in the early prime of life, with all the wonderful possibilities that continued life suggested, it was natural that He should cling to it, and may not the thought of surrendering it so early have been one of the ingredients in the cup? But at the Father's bidding He became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross.

Can you not hear Him singing to Himself as He descended the darksome iron staircase into the Crypt of Death, "Thou wilt not leave my

soul in Hades, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One (*i.e.*, My Body) to see corruption ; Thou wilt show Me the ways of Life, and make Me exceeding glad with Thy countenance." His voice grows fainter as He descends into those unexplored depths, but it does not falter. The Father would surely raise Him up again, and give Him another life, richer, fuller, and more perfect than could be contained within the limits of His manger-cradle and the rock-hewn grave. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

When the believer reaches the moment known as death, his soul, so far as we can understand, goes forth from this mortal case, leaving it as some of the lower forms of life slough off their outer skin. It is not unusual to meet with the skin, which the snake has cast aside, amid the withered leaves of autumn. But the soul is not disembodied. The radiant body of Resurrection may not as yet be given, but it is robed in the psychical, or astral, body, which is being woven beneath this. It is probable that we are building it up by each deed of self-denial and self-sacrifice. Every time that we bring into subjection the body of our humiliation, we are contributing to the growth of that fair tenement of the soul, which shall be its more perfect expression and implement.

This surely is the House which is of Heaven, concerning which Paul speaks so rapturously (2 Cor. v.).

Thus attired, the soul passes into the presence of Christ. It is not adequate to speak of that condition of existence as being Paradise, for surely the Resurrection, of Christ has greatly altered our whole conception of the Unseen World. He went with the dying thief to Paradise, but Paradise is only the *third* heaven (compare 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4); and now He has ascended far above all the heavens (Eph. iv. 10). We have a Great High Priest, who hath passed through the heavens (Heb. iv. 14). If then when we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord, it must be true of us also, when we depart to be with Him, that we enter upon the fulness of that blessed state, which is transcendent and heavenly. What other changes may await us we know not. What may be prepared for us, as the trumpet of the Archangel sounds, and the dead are raised, is a Divine mystery, or secret. But this we know, that the time, long or short, which may elapse between the moment called Death and the hour of full consummation and bliss is not a thin and attenuated existence, when the bodiless ghost shall be carried hither and thither by the breath

of Eternity. Still less is it a period of unconsciousness. The body sleeps, but the untiring soul, as keenly alive as ever, is ever elaborating new plans and going forth on new exploits. Not one moment of cessation from vivid consciousness.

The works of those who die in the Lord follow with them into the Eternal World. They see His face, and serve Him, and His Name is on their foreheads. Some rule over ten cities, and some over five; others judge angels; and some surely will be sent with the good news of the revealed Love of God to announce them to distant worlds "to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places may be made known, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God."

In the case of the Lord there was no period of unconsciousness between His death and Resurrection, and there will be none for us. A moment of shadow as the soul disentangles itself from its grosser embodiment, then freedom in the morning air of Eternity.

XX

"The Third Day He Rose Again from the Dead"

WHY are we sure of our Lord's Resurrection?

There is, first, the evidence of the Open Grave. On the Friday night, the women left the sepulchre with many tears, and were succeeded after a brief interval by the Roman sentries, and so the weary hours sped with leaden-footed pace until the third morning broke. What a spectacle was revealed by the herald streaks that glimmered timidly over Olivet? The stone disturbed; the sentries panic-stricken; angels radiant with tidings of the Risen Christ; but the dear body gone, only the grave-clothes were left.

But that missing body and those remaining clothes are to us among the most conclusive of all the proofs of our Lord's glorious Resurrection. Where was the body that had been nailed to the cross and buried so lovingly in that garden-tomb?

Some say that He swooned, and had recovered as He lay in His narrow niche; and rolled away the stone with his own hand. But how could

one who had passed through the scourging and the death of consuming agony, who had sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane, and had fainted beneath the weight of His Cross on the *Via Dolorosa*, have become possessed of sufficient strength to move a stone which had required the united strength of three or four to roll into its place? But suppose that He was capable of this, was there any conceivable reason for Him to leave behind His clothes? How impossible, too, to think that He was somewhere in hiding on the Day of Pentecost, in hiding on the Ascension Day, in hiding when Stephen was for His sake stoned! The hypothesis is too monstrous to be entertained for a moment.

Could His enemies have borne away His body? Surely not, for it would have been the easiest thing possible for them to produce it directly His friends began to proclaim His Resurrection. Here would have been a conclusive proof that their contention could not be sustained.

If robbers had stolen it, would it not have been well worth their while to have produced it when the Sanhedrim was endeavouring to put down the voice of the infant Church. If His *friends* had borne it off, how impossible they would have found it to convince the world that He who was

crucified in weakness was living by the power of God.

Think, too, of the orderliness of that sepulchre. In their hurry to the sepulchre on the morning of the Resurrection, John outstripped his older friend, and his loving, and, therefore, quick eye, instantly detected the orderliness with which the clothes were disposed, and we are told that "he saw and believed." That the handkerchief, which had been bound about His head, should be wrapped together in a place by itself was in itself evidence enough that the Master was risen. If His *friends* had taken away the body they would have borne it off decently covered. If His *enemies* had done so surely they would not have taken the trouble to unwind it. To them both linen clothes and spices would have been an appreciable addition to their spoils. Surely there was something in the appearance of the clothes which could not be accounted for, except that they had collapsed by the transformation which had changed the solid body on which they rested into something as unsubstantial as the viewless air. "He seeth the linen clothes lying."

Then with what tenderness Jesus had wrapped up the napkin which had been lovingly placed around His head! As the gift of tender love He

could not lightly cast it aside, but with His own hands had wrapped it together, and laid it by itself. Surely this was a trait, living and compelling of Him who had bidden the multitudes sit down in ordered ranks, had ordered the fragments to be collected, and who noticed with a smile the two common coins dropped by a poor woman in the treasury.

The Resurrection Body was evidently not altogether dissimilar to that which the Apostles had known and loved. Mary recognised the voice. Thomas beheld the scars of the cross, they all knew Him, convinced against their will. Yet how different! All the former substance was present, but in another form, as water may exist in the form of steam. If matter be, as modern science says, only a form of electricity, why should not the rate of vibration have become so altered, that what had been visible to human eyes should evade them, just as certain sounds are too shrill and piercing for the majority of ears! Thus, the Lord could pass through closed doors, appear and disappear, and ascend contrary to gravitation, to the higher home from which He came.

XXI

"The Third Day He Rose Again"

THERE are other proofs of this central fact of our Religion.

And it should be borne in mind that Christianity is not primarily a system of Philosophy or Theology. It is not, therefore, capable of being proved by argument, but the facts on which it rests are attested by eye-witnesses.

The disciples did not expect Christ to rise. Rénan's suggestion as to the origin of the belief in the Resurrection would be more worthy of credence if they had done so. It would have been credible that an excited imagination, which was eagerly expecting to see Christ risen from the tomb, might have mistaken a fluttering whiteness in the weird twilight for His presence. Many of the so-called appearances of the Middle Ages were probably due to this. Young girls expected to see an angel or the Mother of our Lord, and the expectation so wrought on their imagination as to assume bodily form and shape.

But with the disciples and friends of Christ the

case was far different. Did the women expect Christ to rise? Why then did they prepare their spiceries and come so early to the tomb? Did Mary expect Jesus to rise? Why then did she mistake Him for the gardener? Did Thomas expect Him to rise? Why, then, did he say, "Except I see in His hands the print of the nails I will not believe?" Did the disciples as a whole expect to see Him risen? Why then did Jesus upbraid them with their slowness of heart to believe the Scriptures?

The testimony of Paul is of priceless value in this respect. He had the opportunity of knowing all that the Pharisees could say against belief in our Lord's Resurrection. From his boyhood he had been taught to hate the Nazarenes: to despise their claims. He had investigated the whole case for himself, as the immense sacrifices which he was compelled to make for his belief compelled him to do, but he was willing to surrender everything rather than renounce the faith which had been begotten in his soul by that vision on the road to Damascus.

The Resurrection was witnessed to, not by one lone woman, but by 500 brethren at once, most of whom were living when Paul wrote his first letter to Corinth. They not only saw Him, but

ate with Him. They did not see Him at a distance but near, not once or twice but often. They heard from His own lips things touching the Kingdom of God. There is no event in history more thoroughly authenticated. If we refuse to accept this evidence, none would avail to convince us.

Notice the emphasis that the Apostle laid on this sublime event. "*Yea, rather,* is risen again" (Rom. viii. 34). We stand before the cross where Jesus died, and contemplate the infinite love which led Him to that supreme act." Instead of the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross!" We try to estimate the full results of His death in this and other worlds. We endeavour to penetrate the mystery of that cry of forsakenness, and to unravel the secret of His broken heart. We cry, O miracle of miracles! O mystery of mysteries, O unparalleled love!

But Paul cries, "*Yea, rather.*" It was as though he said, Great and precious as is the death, the Resurrection of the Lord is still greater and more precious, because it is the Father's ratification of His claims, and the seal of His acceptance as our Mediator and King. The cross tells us much, the open grave tells us more. In the death we realize how near Jesus can come to every soul of man, who is frail as the flower and grass, but

in the Resurrection we realize that He who died in weakness lives by the power of God.

Do we sufficiently realize "the power of the Resurrection?" What a power is exerted on an entire family when the eldest boy leaves the village home for a situation in the great city. The thoughts of the mother and father, of the sisters and brothers are constantly travelling across the intervening distance, and sending wireless messages of love and prayer. They feel that they have a stake in London now. It almost seems as much their city as the nearest market town. If they hear any one speaking of London they listen with a new interest as though they were citizens already.

Thus is it with those who love our Lord Jesus. He has conquered death and the grave. Leading captivity captive, He has gone like another Joseph into the great and awful Palace. And as we are one with Him, we, too, have passed into that strange new life. We died with Him, lay in His tomb, and were raised in Him, when He rose, and in Him we sit enthroned.

XXII

"He Ascended"

The Scene

No first-class writer of fiction would attempt a double climax of his plot. If he has wrought out his conception from stage to stage until the various threads are woven into one final scene, he dares not challenge the reader to follow him in a second and further climax. But what fiction dare not attempt, these unsophisticated historians have done. Had they invented the Gospel story, surely they would have been content to trace their Master's steps to the Cross, and His body to the grave. The mind of man could not have added to the supreme tragedy of Calvary aught more arresting and amazing. It would not have sought anything beyond, or been able to discover a Pelion to place on Ossa.

But even if it be supposed that the Evangelists had sought to *invent* a description of the Saviour's visible return to His Father's House, how different would have been the details of His Home-going. They would have gathered all Jerusalem to

witness it; would have painted Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate as posted to see His triumph, in spite of all their machinations; would have imitated the departure of Elijah by giving Him a chariot of fire, and borrowed from the announcement of His birth a choir of angels. On the supposition that they had to invent it, they would surely have painted an apotheosis, whose colouring would have worthily befitted the return of the Son of God, as He led captivity captive.

How different from all this is the simple narrative of the Gospel! "He led them forth," we are told, "as far as to Bethany." It is unlikely that His Form would have been apparent to any eyes but theirs. It is not given to the ordinary natural eye to discern the supernatural and spiritual. To the ordinary citizens of the Holy City it seemed as if an ordinary group of wayfarers was making its way through the streets to one of the Eastern gates, but none guessed that before or amongst them went One fairer than the sons of men, He, whom some six weeks before the rulers had hounded to His death, and the Roman soldiers had nailed to the Cross.

They trod again the well-known path, crossed the familiar brook, ascended the road down which the procession of lowly triumph had come with

shouts of Hosanna, turned once more to look upon the well-known scenes of Temple and City, on which the light of sunrise was breaking, passed over the brow of the hill and dipped down into the little village of Bethany, nestling beneath its palm trees, and there, before Jerusalem was well awake, or the villagers were beginning to pour along the road, to sell the produce of their gardens, a little eager group assembled, with a strange awe in their hearts, hardly realizing, perhaps, that this was the last time that those blessed feet should stand upon the Mount of Olives, till He should come again in the Glory of the Father and of the Holy Angels.

In addition to the Apostles, surely Martha, Mary, and Lazarus must have been summoned to join the little group, and were thus assured of a love which time could not cool, nor distance sever. What a memorable meeting, and how precious every word He spoke! Amongst His last words were the assurance that they should receive power to become His witnesses. His voice was full of more than wonted pathos, His face shone as the Sun, His hands, as He spake, were outspread in benediction. "And it came to pass, while He blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven."

There was no sudden rupture of their intercourse. Without abruptness, or precipitancy, He withdrew from the scenes of earthly ministry, as gently and unobtrusively as He had come. "He was received up into Heaven." "While they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

XXIII

"He Ascended into Heaven"

Beyond the Cloud

When the beggar, Lazarus, died, he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; when Elijah passed home he went by a chariot of fire, sent from the Father's Home, in honour of His brave servant and son; but when Jesus ascended up where He was before, it was by the innate beauty and dignity of His character. It was as though its specific gravity was too light for the dense atmosphere of our world, and naturally sought its own divine and heavenly level.

The last vision that man had of the ascending Lord, as He departed out of this world unto the Father, was of His outstretched hands in the act of Benediction. Still His words fell in flakes of music, still His pierced hands blessed them, and still they gazed after Him, as He went, until the chariot-cloud, moored in mid-air for the purpose, received Him, or to use another metaphor, fell between them and His receding figure, as the curtain of the Tabernacle behind the figure of the High Priest.

But what happened on the other side of that cloud? Where the Evangelist leaves off, the Apostle begins, and tells us that between that cloud and His throne were gathered principalities and powers, might and dominion (Eph. i. 21). We gather from a comparison with a subsequent paragraph in the same Epistle, that these were not friendly but antagonistic. They were the rulers of the darkness of this world, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (vi. 12).

It was as though a summons had been sent forth to all the dark powers of Hell to make one last rally to prevent the Saviour's final ascent. Of course, there could have been no thought whatever of successfully preventing the return of the Son to the bosom of the Father. He had come from the abysmal depths of Deity, these were His native Home. Even whilst He had been a pilgrim and sojourner in this far country He had been in Heaven (John iii. 13). God must go to God. But the great object of contention was the proposal to take our human nature with Him to the right hand of God, raising it to the supreme place in the Universe. It was this that aroused the intense opposition of those fallen spirits, which, as we are assured by Scripture and observation, throng the lower heavens.

They regard themselves as beings of a superior order to ourselves. Created earlier, and perhaps endued with larger powers, the angels " that kept not their first estate " claim a priority in the ranks of existence over that youngest born of the family of moral beings—man. It was therefore, an unwelcome discovery to learn that the Son of God was not content to wear our humanity for a few brief years, but was bent on bearing it, married in indissoluble union with His own, beyond the highest heavens.

It would seem, therefore, that the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that works in the sons of disobedience, summoned all the forces of malign and wicked spirits to bar the way of the Ascending Lord. Again it was the hour of the power of darkness. The conflict of the Garden and the Cross was renewed. Christ's assailants gathered for their last great stand, until that yet future day when their ranks will be broken for ever before the charge of the armies of heaven, following Him on white horses, and clothed in pure linen, white and clean (Rev. xix. 11-16).

But you might as well endeavour to keep a cork at the bottom of the ocean by heaping miles of sea-water on it, as repress the ascending Lord by massing against Him the black squadrons of

dark demon hosts. He cleft His way through them, as a sunbeam might cleave the morning mists. "God set Him at His own right hand in the Heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come."

XXIV

"He Ascended into Heaven"

Captivity led Captive

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, which, on account of its numerous references to the Ascension, may well be described as "The Ascension Epistle," we are told that "When He ascended up on high," our Lord "led captivity captive," and both received and gave gifts to men (Eph. iv. 8).

That quotation is borrowed from one of the sublimest of the Psalms, an ode of almost unrivalled splendour, which was composed by David on the occasion of the carrying of the ark from the obscure lodging, in which it had tarried for many months, to the newly-prepared tent on Mount Zion.

A study of this Psalm—the 68th—will reveal these successive steps. As the priests stoop to assume the sacred burden of the ark, taking on their shoulders what might be deputed to no ox-cart, the white-vestured choristers sing softly of the Exodus, when God went forth before His

people, marching through the wilderness at their head. As the procession moves slowly forward, the Psalmist tells of the quivering earth, the dropping skies, the panic-stricken flight of heathen kings, whilst the women that publish the tidings are a great host.

Finally, as the festal march, accompanied by the blast of trumpets, the clang of cymbals, and the sweet voices of the singers, begins to climb the sacred Mount, there is a new and loftier note in the song. It seems as though the air is full of angels. The old cruel spirits, which had haunted the place in the days of the Jebusites, have given place to "thousands of angels and twenty thousand of the chariots of God" (ver. 17). The obscene and evil hosts, who had for so many centuries dominated the minds of men, are being led in chains to receive their righteous doom. They who were wont to lead in captivity are now reduced to captivity. The hands that used to fix the iron fetters on the wrists of the conquered are now fast closed in fetters. From myriads of voices the victorious refrain is repeated.

Every splint of wood in the Ark, every stone in Mount Zion, and every note in Hebrew minstrelsy were symbolical of Jesus Christ. "The testimony of Jesus" was the aim and object of

the entire Hebrew economy; the Apostle, therefore, was in exact accord with the entire spirit of the Old Testament, when beneath the guidance of the Spirit of God, he took up this ancient Psalm, making it a new song, as he applied it to the Ascension of our Lord, and said of Him that He also led captivity captive. This phrase is borrowed from Deborah's magnificent apostrophe to Barak—"Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam" (Judges iv. 12). What a glimpse of an old-world triumph! First, the war-worn but victorious soldiers, then the car drawn by milk-white steeds, on which the Victor stands erect and garlanded, behind him slaves bearing the spoils, and lastly the long lines of captives, amongst them, sullen, cowed, and silent, the kings whose nod had sufficed to decide the fate of kingdoms.

When our Lord went through the Heavens, it was not as Victim but as Warrior, not as the dying Lamb but as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Thousands of angels accompanied Him, welcoming Him home, and bound in fetters, behold the captive forms of Evil! The world—"I have overcome the world;" Death and Hades—"I have the keys of Hades and of Death;" the Grave—"O Grave, where is thy victory;" and

greater than them all, he that had the power of death, even the devil, who had kept myriads in his thrall. " The Breaker is gone up before them ; they have broken up and passed through the gate, and the Lord at the head of them " (Micah ii. 13).

XXV

"He Ascended into Heaven"

As Priest

We are told that the World's Redeemer passed through the Heavens (Heb. iv. 14, R.V.). We know that there are three Heavens, and there may be seven (2 Cor. vii. 2). But whatever be their number, Jesus passed through them as the High Priest passed through the Courts and Curtains of Tabernacle or Temple until He reached the Most Holy Place, where the Shechinah shone above the Ark. But all these things were patterns of the things in the Heavens (Heb. ix. 9).

The Old Testament precedes the New, in order to give us God's definitions and nomenclature; and the very design of the Levitical system was to furnish the phrases and symbols, which, in the process of time, would be required to describe the deepest mysteries of forgiveness, mediation, acceptance, and fellowship with God.

In order to impress on man his unfitness and unworthiness to enter the Divine Presence apart from the Mediation of the Divine-man, a special place was constructed, viewed as the peculiar

residence of God. Ordinary men, who were of unclean lips and dwelt among a people of unclean lips were carefully excluded from its precincts. A certain class, however, was carefully selected, and of this the picked and perfectly developed men were again chosen, to whom was assigned the privilege of representing their fellows in the sacred courts; and of these only one who must be dressed in stainless white, and bear blood in his hands, was allowed to enter the inner shrine on one great day in the year.

But what a blessing that he could enter! What a comfort it must have been for those who were "ignorant and out of the way" to realize that he represented them, that in His Person they were accepted and welcome, and that nothing of their failure could hinder the mediation of their High Priest. Were their names not graven on his breast-plate, and borne on his shoulders! Had He not promised to plead for them at the hour of prayer! Was not the sacrificial blood which He bore a sufficient atonement! The most troubled heart might rest in such considerations.

This is exactly our position before God's Majestic Purity and Stainless Holiness. As of old, the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies to stand before the Mystic Light that shone

between the Cherubim, and plead for the people on the ground of the shed blood, so our ascended Lord passed through the Heavens " now to appear in the presence of God for us."

We must not think, of course, that Jesus needed to propitiate an angry and unwilling God, because we know that God loved the world and that " God was in Christ reconciling men to Himself ; " but we may be thankful to realize that He is God's Ideal imputed to those who believe, that He has met the claims of infinite Justice, that life has come through His wounds, and atonement through His blood.

What a comfort it is to be able to say, " Look not on me, nor on my past, O Thou of purer eyes than to behold sin, but behold my Shield, look on the Face of Thine anointed and beloved Son, my representative and propitiation. Accept me in virtue of what He is, and did, and will do for ever ! "

Throughout a memorable chapter in that great Epistle which specially elaborates these thoughts, the writer repeatedly strikes the note that " He ever liveth," and that " He ever liveth to make intercession " (Heb. vii.). And in the Book of Revelation we behold the Angel of the Covenant mingling much incense with the Prayers of Saints

offered on the Golden Altar, which is before the Throne (Rev. viii. 3). What words or symbols could more effectually reassure those who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the Gospel! When our faith grapples such thoughts as these, we are kept from drifting on the surge of life's tides (Heb. vi. 19).

Directly the laborious duties of the Great Day of Atonement were over, the High Priest arrayed himself in his splendid robes, and came forth to bless the congregation. So will our Saviour reappear, returning from the heaven of heavens, which has received Him till the restitution of all things of which God has spoken since the world began.

He appeared once to put away our sin. He appears always before the face of God for us. He will appear the second time in glory to put the last touches on His work by Resurrection and Eternal Judgment.

XXVI

"He Ascended into Heaven"

As Forerunner and Paraclete

"I go to prepare a place for you," Jesus said. Not otherwise could the Unseen have become real to those who loved Him. "We know not whither Thou goest," so had they spoken. But when He uttered those illuminating words, a shaft of golden light fell on all the future. He was going to the Father's House; there were many mansions there; He was about to prepare a place for them; and where He was in the Unseen Holy, there also would they be. And it was enough.

How strange and wonderful the distant metropolis seems to the people of a remote and desolate coast, to which the postman comes but once a week, and in which the scream of the railway whistle never sounds. The mother of a fisherman's orphaned children mentions its name with a strange awe, as she recounts on winter evenings what she has heard of its splendour, its wealth, its sin, its nameless perils. But presently one of her boys goes there in a coasting barque, and returns with stories of all he has seen, and the distant becomes near, and the unfamiliar less

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strange and terrible. Finally, if one of the boys settles there, and writes often of all that he is doing, and says that he is making money and getting on, that he is preparing a home for those he loves, and will never be content until they come to him, and goes on to describe the arrangements which he is making by which all the tastes and idiosyncrasies of his loved ones will be perfectly consulted and met, then for the whole family that distant city is almost as familiar and dear as their native cottage with its peat smoke and cow byre.

It is thus that Jesus has invested the Unseen World with the tenderest associations for those who believe in God, and believe also in Him. Somewhere, and not far away, He is. The blue curtains of the sky barely conceal Him. He is moving to and fro, engaged on our behalf in making our future home as fit as possible for the natures which He is training for their new environment. As the bird prepares the nest for her brood, as the wild beast of the forest prepares its lair for its young, as the human mother for months before the child is born prepares for its needs, so that nothing is required by the little helpless babe that tender foresight has not anticipated, so the Lord Jesus is preparing for us things

which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.

It may be asked, is there any proof that the Ascended Lord is thus engaged on our behalf? Surely there is, in the fact that His influence is continually making itself felt in the realms of human thought and action. By His Spirit Jesus is always influencing the course of events on the shifting scenes of earthly history. Every revival of religion that moves the heart of the Church, every advance in missionary enterprise, every fresh accession of light on the great problems of eternity, every new prophet or teacher which stirs the heart of the listening crowd, is the gift of the Ascended Christ, and the proof that He lives and cares. "He gave" (may we not add, *He gives?*) "some, Apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

There is a yet more personal proof that the Ascended Christ is deeply interested in the well-being of His Church. "Unto *every one of us* is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." He receives gifts for us, and bestows them on us—on every one of us.

When a desire awakens in the heart it is a proof that there is some good thing in store,

which will make our nature fuller and richer than ever. Apart from the entrance of that desire, we might fail to look for or wish the perfecting of our character and the fulfilment of our destiny. But wherever there is such desire, it is the certain evidence that the supply of its craving awaits us in the Ascended Christ. The spirit of evil may offer some lower form of gratification, but if we dare to refuse it and wait only upon God, if we claim and appropriate the unseen but infinite supply from the Hands of our Lord, if we persist in affirming our possession and in thanking Him that we have received—we shall have ever new and repeated proofs that Jesus lives for us in God's presence as the channel of the Divine supply.

XXVII

"He Sitteth at the Right Hand of God"

His Majesty

"THE Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on my right hand, until I have made thy foes the footstool of thy feet." This is a quotation from an ancient Messianic Psalm. Our Lord said that David said it, being taught by the Holy Spirit; and out of it He made a puzzle, which His wily foes could not answer without making admissions, which would concede His claims.

"What think you about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" "David's," they replied. "How then," He asked, "does David call Him Lord? For if he calls Him Lord, how can He be his Son?" (Ps. cx. 1; Matt. xxii. 41). No one could say a word in reply, nor, from that day forth, did any one venture to put a question to Him.

But what dignity is here! The right hand is always the place of dignity and honour. To sit at the right hand of the King is the privilege of the Queen or eldest son, of the Vicegerent or Favourite: and to be invited to sit at the right

hand of Jehovah, this can only belong to "the Man that is His fellow." To which of the Angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, till I make thy foes a footstool for thy feet?" (Heb. i. 13). They are ministering spirits, sent forth to render service for the benefit of them, who, before long, will inherit salvation: but to the Son He saith: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

When, therefore, in the Creed, we avow our belief that He who was known as Jesus of Nazareth now sitteth at the right hand of God, we acknowledge as clearly as words can do it that He is God, and that the Father has crowned Him with glory and honour.

Of course if we admit that Jesus Christ is all this, it becomes us to give Him reverence. He is our Brother, but He is our God. We must not only be orthodox in Creed, but becoming in behaviour and speech. It does not follow that those who bow their heads at each mention of His name are superior in these respects to those who do not literally conform to such observance; but it becomes us all to remember that His Name is above every name, that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the Glory of God the Father.

Nothing glorifies the Father more absolutely than this loyal and constant recognition of the glory of His Son.

There are several practices which such a recognition will enforce. We shall for the most part avoid speaking of Him familiarly by the human name of Jesus, and shall either prefix the title *Lord*, or follow it by *Christ*, the Hebrew term for the Messianic King. We shall adopt a reverential posture when we address Him, either standing or kneeling, but not lolling listlessly. We shall obey His precept with careful obedience, lest He should upbraid us as He did the chosen people, saying, "If I be King, where is Mine honour?"

Some men, whom we know, and who cannot be accused of cant or weakness, are so inspired with their conception of the Glorious Exaltation of their Master, that they seem to be always courteous, standing in His Presence, with uncovered heads, and something of His dignity passes into their demeanour.

Emerson remarks of the English Cathedrals that their custodians by habitual contemplation of the stately beauty around them, become imbued with a certain stateliness of mien, which well becomes them; and certainly it is impossible for the mind to dwell constantly on the glories

of Jesus without becoming changed from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.

What an inspiring thought is here, that He whom we know as our Kinsman and Friend, is in the midst of the throne, possessed of infinite power, wisdom, and love. *Our* human nature ranks highest in the universe of created things. We are brethren of the King, and when we pray, we speak into the ear of One before whom the four living creatures, emblems of the highest intelligence and the twenty-four elders fall down, saying, "Thou art worthy."

XXVIII

"He Sitteth at the Right Hand of God"

His Energy

THE Right Hand is the symbol of the putting forth of Power. The Psalms abound with such words as these :

Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power ;
Thy right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy.
The right hand of the Lord is exalted :
The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.

This is only a figure of speech. God is not to be localised at any one spot in His boundless universe. He is everywhere, and He is equally everywhere. Every part of the wide creation is equally His throne, and equally the place of His right hand. This is the inner secret on which Faith builds her reckonings.

Wherever there is the putting forth of Divine energy, you have the operation of the right hand of the Most High. When a sparrow falls to the ground in the forest depths, it is there. When a little child is suddenly withdrawn from peril, it is there. When a faithless disciple is about to sink into the depths of the lake, it is there to catch and uphold him. If we take the wings

of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall His hand lead us, and His right hand shall hold us. He caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, dividing the water before them, to make Himself a glorious name. Whenever the Prophets and Seers of the Hebrew Commonwealth came across an urgent need for the Divine Interference they did not hesitate to bid the Almighty pluck his right hand from His bosom in order to deliver and avenge. "Awake, awake, oh arm of the Lord!"

We are therefore quite prepared for the announcement of the Evangelist, that when our Lord had finished His instructions to His disciples, he was received up and continued to co-operate and work with them, as they went everywhere preaching His word. So deeply inwrought into their consciousness was this conception, that when the Apostles had returned to their own company from the remonstrances and threatenings of their foes, they asked the Lord to stretch forth *His* hand and do wonders and signs in the sight of the people.

There are two significant expressions in the Book of the Acts. It begins something in this strain: "In my former treatise, the third Gospel,

I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught as a beginning." Notice the careful wording which the beloved physician adopts. He does not admit that the death of our Lord put an end to His mighty deeds, but that when the Heavens received Him out of their sight, He was only just beginning to make His mighty power known, He sits at the right hand of God, ever going forth in its company to do great things for His people.

We are told also in Acts ii. 47, that "*the Lord* added to the Church daily such as should be saved." Notice it is said that the Lord did this great and blessed thing. Not only does He do according to His will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, but when a dying but penitent malefactor is lifted from a scaffold to the Paradise of God, whenever the tears of broken hearts have to be wiped away, whenever the lips of the Messenger have to be touched with a live coal from off the altar, whenever a brand has to be plucked from the burning, whenever a Saul has to be arrested on his murderous path in answer to the prayers of an Ananias, there the right hand of God is going forth in its might or soft gentleness, and Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, All in all, in its operations.

Sometimes we are told that He worked by His servants, and sometimes *with* (Acts xv. 4 and 12). The first preposition suggests instrumentality, the second co-operation. But each confirms the thought that Jesus *is* the right hand of the Most High. He is the energy of God, whether in Creation, Providence, the Evolutions of human history, or Redemption.

Let us not think of ourselves, then, as standing alone, like Athanasius against the whole world. If we are only doing His will in His way, we may reckon on Him with absolute certitude. Never before the time, and never behind, He will come riding upon a cherub, and flying on the wings of the wind.

XXIX

"He Sitteth at the Right Hand of God"

His Finished Work

THIS is the point on which the Writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews insists. The great point of that marvellous treatise is to prove the superiority of Christianity to the old Levitical rites. Amongst other proofs he adduces the contrast between the wearisome reiteration of the olden sacrifices, which proved their inefficiency by their incessant repetition, with the "once for all" finished work of Christ.

The sacrifices were offered "year by year continually" (x. 1); "there was therefore a remembrance made of this every year" (3); "every priest *stood* in his daily ministry, offering oftentimes the same sacrifices" (11). "But this Man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever *sat down* on the right hand of God." (12). It might be rendered, "He for ever sat down." "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are being sanctified" (14).

In this remarkable passage, the whole gist of the argument turns on the contrasted attitudes

of the priests, and the Priest. There were no seats in the Tabernacle or Temple; no provision was made for sitting; the ministrants must perforce be on their feet, for their work was never done. Year after year, century after century, the unceasing stream of penitents, driven with contrition for the same sins, flowed through the holy places.

But when Jesus said, "It is finished," the work of Redemption to which He had put His Hand when He arose from the bosom of the Father was completed; so far at least as God's side was concerned.

As we compare the Gospels, we find that these memorable words were spoken "with a loud voice." It was, in fact, the shout of a conqueror. *Finished*, the types and shadows of the Jewish ritual. *Finished*, the long line of prophecies, closed like gates behind the King as He passed through. *Finished*, the work which the Father had given Him to do. Finished the ransom—price of man's redemption. Finished, the putting away of sin. "Now once in the end of the ages He was manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. . . . Christ was once offered to bear the sins of the many" (Heb. ix. 26, 28).

This is a redeemed world. Something definite

was done for it when Jesus died. He achieved our emancipation from the condemnation and thrall in which our race has involved itself, though the application of His mighty work on our behalf must largely depend on each man's repentance, faith, and appropriation. The debt is paid, but we must listen to the trumpet of jubilee, and go forth from the house of the creditor. We must believe that we have sold ourselves for nought, and have been redeemed without money. "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope, even to-day I declare that I will render double unto thee."

Once in conversation with an aged Christian minister, to my great surprise I discovered that he was accustomed each day to confess all the sins of which he retained the recollection, as far back as his thoughts could travel. It was astounding. This is clearly not the divine method. God casts the sins of His children behind Him into the depths of the sea; blots them out; remembers them no more. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just"—faithful to His promises, and righteous to Jesus Christ,—"to forgive us our sins."

What can all this mean, except that we too may enter into His rest. As *He* sat, *we* may sit.

As He ceased from His works, so may we from ours. We may sit together with Him in the heavenlies. "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." So long as Jesus retains His seat, we may possess ourselves in peace.

XXX

"He Sitteth at the Right Hand of God"

His Expectation

THIS is the centre of the great argument of 1 Cor. xv. 25. "He must reign," *i.e.*, He must continue seated on the Throne, until the Father shall have put all things under His feet (Ps. viii. 6; cx. 1). Even the last enemy, Death, will be placed by the Father under the feet of the Son. The proud neck of the all-conqueror must become the footstool of the feet which were pierced by him with the rugged iron of the Cross.

Of course, when it is said that all things are to be subjected unto Him, it must be clearly understood that the Father Himself must be excepted. But when the whole universe has been made subject unto Him, then the Son also Himself shall become subject to Him who has granted Him so marvellous a supremacy, and God shall be All in all. "Then," as Bengel puts it, "all creatures will be able to say, God is everything to me."

The attitude of Christ is therefore one of calm expectancy. The Father said, "Ask of me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine

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inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession."

Our Lord has asked, and in reply the Father has bidden Him sit at His right hand, whilst He subdues the principalities and powers of the Heavenly Places. The task seems impossible and the more so, because God refuses to avail Himself of the Divine attribute of omnipotence. He will conquer by moral and spiritual means, though it may take millenniums. But silently, slowly, and surely, the process of subjugation is going on.

Granted that enormous wrongs are still perpetrated by man against his fellow, that war and lust and crime with linked hands ravage vast tracts of territory, and that the floods of misrule and rebellion lift up their voices; granted that the kings and princes of the world are gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ; yet they are only doing whatsoever God's hand and counsel determined before to be done. Their very fury is another step in the direction of their final subjugation. Every plunge fastens the noose more securely round their necks (Acts iv. 28). They dig pits into which they fall themselves.

Examination by torture is a thing of the past. The sports of the people are less debasing, for

even in Spain the bull-fight is decaying. Society is more careful of girl and child life. A victorious foe feels it incumbent to care for the wounded of the vanquished. Arbitration Treaties fill the air. The Public Press is quick to expose wrong-doing. The evils of over-crowding receive the attention and engage the sympathy of our foremost men. Abominable inhumanity is not permitted to pass unchallenged, as witness the late diabolical outrages on the natives of the Congo-Balolo territory.

When compelled by the lords of the Inquisition to recant his discovery that the earth moved round the sun, and to accept their theory that it was stationary, Galileo muttered between his teeth, *yet it moves ;* so in the teeth of those who indulge in their pessimistic assertions that things are waxing worse, we reiterate our conviction that God's purpose is quietly moving on, and bringing about that new Heavens and new Earth, in which dwelleth Righteousness.

Meanwhile Christ sits and waits. It is to this attitude that the Beloved Apostle alludes, when he says, that we are partakers in the sorrows, the Kingship, and the patient endurance of Jesus (Rev. i. 9).

We sometimes say to each other, "How

can He bear to see all the horror and misery of this poor world!" He sees not yet all things put under Him—that is most surely true. But He sees that they will be (Heb. ii. 9, etc.). He beholds the emancipated race, the far-off interest of tears, the joyful harvest, and it nerves Him to endure.

In patience He possesses His soul, because He sees that all things are working for good. He knows that the Father will not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth. Already He hears singing across the field of battle the refrain, "The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever."

XXXI

"God, the Father Almighty"

THE Creed strikes again the note it struck in the first clauses, but there is now an added force and beauty.

The most blessed thing in child-life is the slow and blissful awakening, not only to the blue sky, the sun, the frolic of the kitten, the lawns enamelled with gold and silver, but to the two faces that bend over it, and the two arm-cradles which seem softer and cosier than blankets, feathers, or down. We wish we could think ourselves back to those earliest moments of recognition. They were carefully registered by the parents, who were our twin deities then, and who, perhaps in Paradise itself, could recall the exact time and place when their baby knew them.

But this is the essential thought—the *Priority* of the Father's Love! The child is not conscious of having made its father love it by any artifice or laboured obedience of its own. It simply awoke to find itself loved ineffably. It was born an heir to great estates, and entered on its possession, making lavish demands upon the

exchequer, and never deeming that its claims could not or would not be met.

This is precisely our position towards God, the "Father Almighty," though theologians have done their best to obscure the thought. Some have said that God was terribly angry with the whole race, and that much was required before He could look on any of us with favour. Others that every child was born into the world, a child of the devil. Others that the new birth must take place before we could claim a share in the Father's Love.

It can never be possible for us to forget what Jesus told us, as to the necessity of being twice-born, if we would stand with Himself on the plane of the most sacred relationship with God. We need to be born, not of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God, if we would receive the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, and call Him, as the Son did in Gethsemane, "Abba Father"; but when all this is stated and admitted, we cannot forget that Paul addressed the Athenians as the offspring of God, and surely this is warrant enough to claim for every little babe that opens its eyes in this world, though it be in gaol, gipsy caravan, or Indian rice-field, the Fatherly regard and love of God. It need do nothing to earn that

love, any more than it has to create the sunshine, but just to yield to it, as when a tiny skiff floats gently on a broad and noble stream.

If we love God it is because He first loved us. If we seek Him, as the child cries for its mother, it is because He taught us to want and lean upon Him. If we are feeling orphaned and lonely, it is because we have not known and believed the Love that God hath to us, and this, perhaps, because we have not cherished an altogether loving, trustful spirit towards others. Our religious life is our poor echo of response to the Divine Purity, Strength and Sweetness, that have been bending over us since our childhood.

Out of that Father's Heart have sprung those blessed provisions for our redemption from sin and folly, for the honouring of justice, the establishment of right relations with the laws of the universe, the methods of soul-purgation and deliverance, which are the theme of all the theologies. But it must never be forgotten that the Father's Love was the origin and source of all. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself."

XXXII

"The Father Almighty"

YES, again! "the Father Almighty," but there is a difference between those words, as we recite them at the beginning of the Creed, and as we recite them now that certain other clauses have attracted us and been explained. We have learnt that Father was not only the Creator, but gave the Son to be the Saviour of the world, that He was crucified, dead, and buried, as the exponent of the Father's loving plan for our salvation, and that "the Man of Love" is now seated at the Father's side. Thus there is an altogether new note in the songs of Eternity.

This is exquisitely illustrated in the fourth and fifth chapter of the Book of Revelation. The word *Apocalypse*, as we all know, is *Unveiling*,—it contains an account of the realities, which John beheld, when the slight veil that hangs between us and them parted for a few minutes. What a comfort it is to know that the word contains no suggestion of long sight or the telescope, for under those circumstances we should have been compelled to think that there was truth in the words,

which are absolutely false, and which no child should be allowed to sing:

> There is a happy land,
> Far, far away.

Heaven is not far away. It lies all around us, from our infancy and onward. Only a veil hides us from it, which may be slit or torn at any moment. The Apocalypse, therefore, simply tells the story of that which *is*, and which *always* is. Hence the value of searching beneath its gorgeous images for the truths that lie beneath.

Now, in those two chapters, there are *five* songs. The third of these is entitled a *new* song, as though it embodied some fresh conception of the Divine Nature; and when once it has been uttered, it seems to enhance the imagination of Heaven, for it absolutely colours and dominates the fourth and fifth.

The earlier part of the fourth chapter describes the throne of the Eternal, bathed in splendour which excels that of earth's most precious jewels. The emerald rainbow of God's perfected purpose surrounds it; the sea of glass is spread out before it. The rarest colours of the natural world are focussed in one rich panorama of beauty. Next we learn of the Eternity and Moral Perfections of God. The ceaseless chant of the wonderful beings

which represent Creation, tells us that God's Nature is Holy. Time with its senses of past, present, and future leaves no trace upon His Eternal Life. Next, we catch the music of that Song of Creation, which ascribes the existence of the whole great universe to the will of its Personal Intelligent First Cause. Still further we are taught that the scroll of history, to which none can add, nor any subtract from it, awaits His hand to unfold it seal by seal. None of these mighty considerations, however, avails to startle a *new* song.

But it is when in the midst of the throne with its burning glory there appears One who bears the marks of Calvary; when the Lamb of the Cross, the Grave, and the Glory appears, who revealed the cost to which the redeeming Love of God was prepared to go, who was made sin for us, and who by His tears and stripes healed us, then Heaven breaks out into a new song. It was as though its imagination were caught, and its admiration aroused. They sang a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the Book and open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain, and hast purchased us to God by Thy blood." Henceforth God the Father Almighty is associated with the Lamb, "as it had been slain."

It is from the Throne of God and of the Lamb that the River issues, whose limpid waters descend with Holy Spirit fulness to the arid plains of Earth. The Throne of God and the Lamb are in the midst of the City and His servants serve Him. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb make the sun and moon needless—" they are the Light thereof." When the Seer looks around for the Temple of the Holy City,—the most natural enquiry for a Hebrew to whom the Temple was the very heart and centre of the Holy City—he is told that the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it.

So is it with this grand old Creed, when it mentions for the second time the Holy Name of the Father Almighty, there is the touch of an added depth and tenderness, sweetness and pathos for the Lamb is in the midst of the Throne, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

XXXIII

"From Thence He shall come to Judge"

ASTRONOMERS tell us that our Sun, with its attendant train of planets, is rushing through space at an inconceivable speed towards a certain star in the cluster Alcyone, still infinitely distant; and it is also true that our world and all our race are hastening forward, with a speed that no power on earth can arrest or slacken, to an event of most momentous interest, to a goal of the utmost sublimity. That event, the final judgment; that goal, the Great White Throne.

This has been the universal belief of man, even apart from the Bible. The wits of Athens who scouted Paul's doctrine of the Resurrection, offered no denial when he said that God would judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He had ordained; and when the same great apostle brought the same great theme before a profligate Roman, and reasoned of the Judgment to come, Felix trembled. In every human bosom, Christian or Pagan, savage or civilized, there is a sense of right and wrong,

a feeling of moral responsibility, a foreboding of final judgment.

As we look round *upon society*, we meet with facts that offer the strongest presumptions in favour of a settling-time, when all the wrongs of time may be eternally rectified. The wicked prosper, whilst the righteous are persecuted; vice drives its carriage, and fares sumptuously every day, whilst Lazarus is borne each day by kindly hands to lie at the rich man's gate. God could never allow such anomalies to exist unless a Day were coming when Time's inequalities shall be adjusted.

Belief in the Judgment is one of the primal principles of the Gospel. Our Lord said, "The Word that I have spoken shall judge him at the last day," and "Marvel not at this, the hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth," and again, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."

There is a sense, of course, in which the Judgment is always in progress. In Matt. xxv. 31, etc., the Son of Man is represented as sitting on the throne of His Glory, while before Him all nations are gathered, and judged according to their temper and spirit, their attitude towards

their poor, their oppressed, their imprisoned captives, those who could not help themselves. This, of course, is always in process. Dynasty after dynasty, race after race, empire after empire, have risen from obscurity, shown themselves capable of government, have exercised imperial authority for a given term of centuries, and then, as they have been eaten through with luxury, rapacity, and cruelty, they have been condemned to the everlasting fire, which is always burning in the universe, for the destruction of institutions which have ceased to fulfil a useful purpose in the world.

It is equally certain that the judgment is constantly being exercised with reference to individual lives. Men speak of it as Nemesis. The old Mosaic saying is much more often applied to modern life than we sometimes think—"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, strife for strife." If a woman takes away a man's affection from his wife, it is more than likely that she, too, will be tormented by jealousy in her own married life. If Jacob deceives his old father he will be deceived by his own sons. As Adonibezek treated three score and ten kings so will he be treated in his day of retribution. Sir Roger

destroys the Bell of the Inchcape Rock, and on that rock his own ship goes to pieces.

There is more of this Retribution being administered in the world of to-day than we suppose. The mills of God may grind slowly, but grind they do, and that to powder.

XXXIV

"From Thence He shall come again to Judge"

It is important to distinguish between "the judgment-seat of Christ" and "the Great White Throne." They are essentially different.

It seems as though some Christians supposed that the question of their final acceptance with God could not be ascertained until the verdict of the end of the world. Nothing could be further from the truth. Apart from scores of arguments against such an hypothesis, the words of Christ are conclusive, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent me, hath Eternal life, and *cometh not unto judgment*" (John v. 24, R.V.). Of course not, because the sins of such have been confessed, judged, and forgiven.

Directly the soul identifies itself with Christ, it is reckoned as having passed through His Cross, Grave, and Resurrection, and it would be inconceivable that it should be treated as though its position were in suspense. It is accepted in the Beloved, adopted into the Family of God,

its sins and iniquities are as though they had never been committed, it is called into fellowship with the Son of God, to assist in His Divine Work of putting down all rebellious rule, authority, and power. The Apostle even informs us that we shall act as Christ's co-assessors, and shall judge angels (1 Cor. vi. 3).

It is likely enough also that the Divine verdict and sentence on other lives than those of His children will be issued long before the final awards of the Great Last Day. Each soul will know long before that time, and perhaps on awakening in Eternity, what the unimpeachable award has been.

Though, therefore, Christian believers need not await the Great White Throne with any amount of alarm, there is for each of them a judgment-seat, " the judgment-seat of Christ," before which they must all stand to be judged. The Apostle knew that even he could not claim exemption from that enquiry to be held by his Lord. " We must *all*," he says, " be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ ; that each may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad . . . therefore we make it our aim that we may be accepted of Him " (2 Cor. v. 9, 10).

This clear statement is, of course, in harmony with the Master's own words. The Lord comes to reckon with His servants, and to apportion them rewards, according to their employment of the talents He had entrusted to them. In the evening hour the Master of the vineyard comes to pay the husbandmen. It is not now a question of salvation or destruction, but of the adjustment of reward ; and the reward is adjusted on the principle of Faithfulness to Trust. Where the two talents have been faithfully turned into four, there is the same generous meed of approbation, " Well done, good and faithful servant," as in the case of those who have turned five into ten.

It seems as though these considerations do not enter into the hearts of the majority of God's people. A professedly Christian man says : " Is it likely that God will send me to hell because I like a little gay society, or enjoy a quiet game of Bridge, or allow myself occasionally to visit music-halls and theatres ? " Certainly God is not likely to send people to hell for such things. But this is the more important question, " What is your Master Christ, who redeemed you at such cost, going to say about a frivolous, vain, and empty life, which was destitute of noble purpose

and strenuous endeavour, and felt it irksome to be always 'on duty?'"

What we should fear most—the Apostle Paul called it "the terror of the Lord"—is lest at the end of a so-called Christian life, He should shut the door in our face,—the door, not of Heaven, but of entrance into those higher festivities and sacred employments which await us yonder. There is a suggestion of this in Luke xii. 46, in which the Master allots a portion with the unbelievers to the servant whom He had honoured with great opportunities, of which he had proved himself unworthy.

XXXV

"He will Come to Judge the Quick and Dead"

The unique fitness of the Judge

"THE Father," said our Lord, "judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Surely it is right that He, who has conducted the whole course of the Mediatorial Kingdom, should preside on the august occasion when it will necessarily come to an end. It was through Him that the promise of hope was spoken to Adam; throughout the ages He has been counter-working the power of evil; His death laid the foundations of eternal victory; and surely to no hand but His could be confided the final scene. "Then He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be All in all."

And who so qualified for this supreme position as Jesus Christ? *Suppose that the judge of all were to be some archangel*, finite indeed, but invested with the highest attributes of wisdom

and power, might we not tremble for the issue? Could any finite being grasp the details of every human life so thoroughly, that there should be no mistake, no overlooking of inconspicuous goodness, no failure to comprehend the complexity of motive, no condoning of specious crime.

What then! *Shall the throne be occupied by the Deity Himself?* Shall men appear before their Maker, and receive the final sentence from the Omniscient? Certainly, such an arrangement would not be liable to the objections which lie against the appointment of a creature, however lofty, to the position of judge. Nothing could escape His eye, nothing warp His judgment, none could impugn the impartial righteousness of His decisions. As the vast multitudes climbed up from their graves, to learn that they were to be judged by their Creator, they would be assured that none of them would have reason to complain that absolute justice had not been done to him.

Yet who would not tremble at the thought? No doubt the decisions would be incontestably just, but would the Great God be able to understand us, to allow for us, to take into consideration our weakness, our frailty, our mortal nature, with all its strange admixture of motive? Ah, terror of terrors! "Enter not into judgment with us,

O God, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified."

This mortal fear seems to cry out for a human Judge! Only man can possess perfect fellow-feeling with man; only man can so enter into the circumstances of our mortal life, as to make due allowances for weakness, heredity, and environment. Yet how could we be satisfied with a merely human judge? Just now, we would not have an angel, because he was not omniscient, but a man would be even more liable to err than one of the first-born sons of light.

What then shall meet our case? We require the Omniscience of God, that is indispensable; but we also need the sympathy of man. What shall we do? We are perplexed, and in despair, until we open the page of Scripture, and learn that "God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world, by that *Man* whom He hath ordained," and that "the Father hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is *a Son of Man*." (See also Acts xvi. 31; John v. 27, R.V., marg.)

This will suffice us! As man, He wept, suffered, was tempted, died, passed through all conceivable circumstances of this mortal life; but as God, the universe rose out of nothing at His Word,

His eyes are as a flame of fire, He has a perfect understanding of all things from the first. There is no fear of miscarriage of justice. He will not flinch before high-handed rebellion, but He will not quench the smoking flax.

XXXVI

"He will Come to Judge the Quick and the Dead"

The Throne and the Congregation

It is described as "a great white throne" (Rev. xx. 11). *Great*, because of the momentous nature of the issues to be settled there. *Great* because of the vast congregation that shall be gathered there, angels from heaven, men from the first man to the last, demons from the pit, an audience that shall assemble only once. *Great*, because of its contrast with all other thrones that shall have been reared throughout the whole course of time. *Great*, because connected with the final winding up of Time, and the entrance on Eternity.

It is also a *white* Throne. *White*, because immaculately pure. There have been plenty of thrones, either black or crimson: black with the crimes of their occupants, or crimson with the blood through which they have been won; but that throne shall be white with the stainless character of the Judge and the immaculate justice of His decisions. Against the burning purity

of that throne, all evil will stand revealed in its true nature.

Pass on to notice *the Assembly at the Bar.* "The angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, hath He reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the last day!" They shall be there, compelled to witness the triumph of Him whom once they challenged in impious and futile war.

All nations of men shall be there, *the quick, i.e.*, those living when the Last Judgment is set, *and the dead, i.e.* all who are in their graves, shall hear His Voice, and come forth. From the sands of sultry deserts, where toiling caravans have sunk down to die; from wintry wastes of ice and snow, where, wrapt in white winding-sheets, the sleeper has slept his last sleep; from the crypt of the stately abbey, from the crowded city cemetery, from the caves and dens of the earth, from ancient pyramids and mausoleums, the dead shall come to judgment.

The sea shall give up its dead; the myriads of sleepers who have gone down in its silent caves, in storm, in battle, or in shipwreck, shall emerge from the abysmal depths, and hasten to be judged.

Death and Hades shall be unlocked by Him, at whose girdle hang their keys, and shall disgorge their victims to swell the mighty mass. Babylon, Jerusalem, Rome, London, New York, will pour forth their myriads. Marathon, Waterloo, and Sedan will start to life, and their squadrons march to that bar. Not one unit of the human family, no shrivelled leaf, no blighted fruit, no tiniest twig will be missing.

A man may evade the summons of an earthly court, but there will be no possibility of evading the warrant of that bar. It is possible to discover a sanctuary, where the human apparitor of justice fails to follow the criminal, but man has never discovered the spot where God is not. The ocean-depths, coral-reefs, and waving sea-weed tresses cry, "God is here;" "the depths of the sea are His also." The pendent crystals of gloomy caverns cry, "It is useless coming here to escape God, see—we are His workshop." Vales never trodden by human foot point to ferns, and flowers, and moss to attest the Divine Presence. Before the commonest acacia-bush in the desert waste, man has to take the shoes from off his feet, because the place is holy ground. No, there is no escaping God. "The small and great must stand before Him." When the

roll is called, each child of our race will have to answer, *Here!*

Ah! vast assembly! Here will be a spectacle of Grandeur and Sublimity which Eternity itself can witness only once!

XXXVII

"He shall Come to Judge both the Quick and Dead"

The Books

We are told that "the Books were opened and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Rev. xx. 12). *What books are these?*

The Book of Providence containing a list of all the benefits received from the Hand of God. The days of health and sunshine; the days of prosperity and gladness; the days of hope and promise. All will be recorded there! Page after page, column after column, line upon line! Loving friendships, holy impressions, glorious opportunities, hair-breadth deliverances, miraculous escapes, necessaries and luxuries, the human and the divine—nothing will be omitted, and all leading up to the Divine challenge—"What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it, wherefore, then, brought it forth wild grapes?"

The Book of *Nature*, from which it will be shown that the sequence of natural law, the evidences

of a Great First Cause, the flush of sunrise, the hush of night, the starry depths, rain, sunshine, and fruitful seasons, were all intended to light men's hearts to God.

The Book of *Memory*, on the leaves of which all things are recorded with inevitable precision. No word or deed of man is lost. A German scholar had a memory so wonderful that he could repeat whole volumes of Latin, German, and French without an error. A Russian officer has been known to repeat the roll-call of any regiment after reading it twice. Psychologists hold that nothing is lost from the memory of man. Impressions remain in the brain like words written on paper in invisible ink. So it has been stated, and so it is; and when God says, "Son, remember!" the sea will give up its dead, and the sins of our lives, of premeditation and impulse, of passion and intellect, of intention and conduct will start to view.

The Book of *Conscience*. Just as a shorthand scribe behind the arras of the court takes down every item in some great trial, noting especially each admission and confession, so does Conscience keep its unerring record, which must be produced at the last.

Lastly, the Book of *Life* will be opened. Often

it is mentioned in successive pages of the Bible. It was referred to by Moses, by Daniel, and by our Lord. The Apostles were bidden to rejoice most of all because their names were written in it. The best reward that the Apostle could devise for his humble helpers was to assure them that their names were written there.

It is called " the Lamb's Book of Life " because had it not been for Him, not one name would have been inscribed, because all in it were set down before the Foundation of the World, and because He purchased them with His most precious blood.

Has He written your name there ? It is more important to be sure of this than to have your name inscribed in the genealogical lists of heralds. " If any was not found written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the Lake of Fire."

There are words in Rev. iii. 5 which suggest that, since Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of all, the names of all are inscribed on those pages, and only blotted out when they force their Divine Keeper to do so. But be that as it may, it is certain that any penitent and believing soul may have his name written in heaven, because he that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life.

XXXVIII

"I Believe in the Holy Ghost"

His Divine Personality

On one occasion, when engaged on the third of his great Missionary Circuits, Paul came to the vast heathen city of Ephesus. After some enquiry he discovered a handful of people, who had given up idolatry, and were turning their faces towards Christianity. The first enquiry, which he put to them was sufficiently startling, and certainly went to the root of the matter. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" "The Holy Ghost!" said they, "we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."

So, at least, the A.V. gives it; and the words might be repeated as they stand, by myriads throughout Christendom. They have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. In some quarters the existence of the Holy Ghost is positively denied; in others it is simply ignored. Year in and year out you hardly hear Him mentioned, except in the Creed, the Doxology, and the Benediction. It is a grievous

omission, but goes far to explain the lack of earnestness, fervour, and life. The river is shut off, small wonder if the desert refuses to blossom as the rose! The Power is switched off. What wonder that the machinery is at a standstill!

We believe in the Personality of the Holy Ghost, *because of the distinct affirmations of Scripture.* No one who accepts the teachings of Christ as conclusive can read the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of the Fourth Gospel, without being convinced that to our Lord, the Holy Ghost was as distinct a Personality as Himself. He always speaks of Him with the personal pronoun. Even though the word for Spirit in Greek is neuter, it is always followed by the ungrammatical but emphatic use of a personal pronoun. *Not* the Holy Spirit, *which* . . . *but* the Holy Spirit, *whom* . . . *He* shall teach, *He* shall glorify, *He* shall convict.

The Apostle bids the Ephesian Christians not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. v. 18). Not grieve the Spirit! Grief can only be felt by a Person, and He must be more than a breath or influence, who can be spoken of in such terms.

Again, when He is speaking of the gifts conferred on the early Church, He ends his enumeration by saying, "All these worketh the self-same

Spirit, distributing to every man severally as He will (I Cor. xii. 11). "*As He will.*" Just now we saw that He had feelings, and could be grieved, now we learn that He has power of choice as well.

Again, when the Antioch Church was awaiting divine direction as to her future, an eye-witness tells us that the Holy Ghost said, "Separate *Me* Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them, so they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost departed" (Acts xiii. 1-4). Here in addition to emotion and will is the decision of authoritative power. Moreover, how could Peter charge Ananias and Sapphira as conspiring to lie to the Holy Ghost (Acts v. 3); and how could our Lord have spoken of a certain sin as a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Mark iii. 29), unless He were as literal a Being as either the Father or the Son?

That He is a *Divine* Person is equally obvious. In every mention of the Benediction His Name occurs with that of the Father and the Son; and repeatedly in the references to the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, there is given an explicit acknowledgment of His Deity. Everywhere it is implied that with the Father and the Son, He must be worshipped and glorified. The Thrice-Holy of the Heavenly Worshippers indicates that

the Sevenfold Spirit which is before the Throne is God.

There is undoubtedly to mortal minds an impenetrable mystery in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, but it is interesting to know that there is no system of ancient Oriental thought, to which it is not familiar ; as though it were a necessity of the human mind to conceive of One who loves, of one who is loved, and of one who is the nexus and bond of love between them.

XXXIX

"I Believe in the Holy Ghost"

Consider His works!

THE earth of old was a mere shapeless mass, the star-dust of which contained moisture enough to make all the oceans, and matter enough for continents and mountains. What reduced this chaos to the ordered beauty of the world in which we live? "The Spirit of God moved (brooded) on the face of the waters."

From the death of Abel to the days of Noah, there was a godly seed, and men called on the name of Jehovah; the line of the sons of God was kept uncontaminated by the enormous sins of the Antediluvian world. How was this possible? "The Spirit of God strove with man."

The time between the Deluge and the Birth of Christ was lit by the words of noble men—Psalmists, Prophets, Law-givers, and Historians—words which shine for ever from the pages of the Bible, and which the world will never let die. How is it that a nation so peculiar, so separate, so marked as the Hebrew race, was able to give its religious literature to the world, and though

placed in the fiercest crucible it has never yielded anything but high morality, truth, and common-sense. How is this phenomenon to be accounted for? There is but one reply, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God."

One of the most remarkable facts in history is the change which came upon the disciples within ten days of the Ascension of Christ. Before that hour they were constantly showing their ignorance of the first principles of His Kingdom, afterwards they never mistook; before, they were as timid sheep, afterwards as lions; before they had no power to move or change men's hearts, afterwards their mere quotation of Scripture seemed potent enough to convict thousands of sin. What explanation can be given, except that when Jesus was welcomed to the Father, He asked and received that other Paraclete of whom He had spoken, and shed Him down on the gathered handful of the upper room.

How is it that the name of Jesus is spreading from land to land, from shore to shore? By what means have the Triumphs of the Cross been won? Why, these ruined temples, these deserted shrines, these idols thrown to the moles and bats? There is again but one reply, Christ is gone, but

the Spirit is here. Christ has sent Him forth from the mediatorial throne to be His Vicegerent.

We stand at Wittemberg and behold the waves of the Reformation rising and overflowing Europe; see Huss and Jerome perish in the fires, but lighting fires that never die down; listen to Savonarola's burning eloquence; hear Cranmer's dying testimony; follow Whitfield in his seraphic labours; study Wesley's magnificent masonry in the Methodist Church; chronicle the successive revivals that have swept over the world, bearing hundreds of thousands into the Kingdom of God! and we have no option than to confess, that we believe in the Holy Ghost.

XL

"I Believe in the Holy Ghost . . ."

The Lord and Giver of Life

When we are born into this world we are not sons of God in the high sense in which we may become so, for we are distinctly told that only those who receive the Christ-life into their hearts obtain the right to become children of God, who were born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 14). It is equally clear that we are not born children of the devil, men only become so when they have made a decisive choice of evil, and have, so to speak, been "born again" into the family of the Devil. We are born simply children of men. "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen. v. 3).

At birth the spirit, which is our capacity for God, the window of the soul that looks out on the Infinite, resembles the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle of old, a mere dark unused chamber, before the shechinal Light and Fire shone within its curtained walls. If Regeneration never takes place, the *soul* is the supreme guide and rule of

life, and the man remains a merely natural, or as the Greek word signifies, a *soulish* man (Cor. ii. 14). But in Regeneration, which may take place in the earliest dawn of consciousness, or on the verge of Eternity, the Spirit of the Living Christ introduces into the *spirit* the seed or germ of His exalted and glorious Being. We are begotten again, " not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever " (I Peter i. 23).

If there were no bees in a garden, with the musical hum of their quivering wings, the plants would be unable to produce bud, blossom, or fruit. It is only as they pursue their untiring ministry of bearing the pollen from one flower to another, fertilising and fructifying them, that the garden is aglow with radiant colour and luscious fruit ; and it is only as the Holy Spirit brings the Christ-germ into our hearts, that we become fragrant or fruitful.

" Ye must be born again." We cannot force our way up into the Kingdom, but must receive the seed of the Kingdom, dropping into us from above. Hence we are told, " Except a man be born *from above*, he cannot see the Kingdom of God " (John iii. 3) ; " Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the

Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (6). Nothing could more plainly asseverate and certify the declaration that the Holy Spirit is the Giver of Life. It is only as He breathes on the slain that the dead of the valley of Vision arise to become a great army.

But He is also the Lord of Life. There is no opportunity for mistaking the accent of authority in His voice. With good reason He has been described as the Vicegerent of the Deity. "Arise and get thee down," He said to Peter, when He was hesitating as to his duty, "and go with them" (*i.e.*, the messengers from Cornelius), "nothing doubting; for I have sent them" (Acts x. 20). "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them"—was there not the imperial ring in those words, which indicated the next forward movement of the Church (Acts xiii. 1-4)? He forbade the Apostles to preach the word in Asia Minor, and suffered them not to go into Bithynia, doing for them what He would do for us all (Acts xvi. 7, 8). Happy are they, then, who are led by the Spirit!

The secret of a blessed Christian experience is to live in the power of this truth, that the Holy Spirit is literally the *Lord*, as He is the *Giver*,

of Life. Sometimes He will direct us towards individuals, as when He said unto Philip, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot" (Acts viii. 29); at other times, we shall be bound in the Spirit to go up unto Jerusalem, knowing that bonds and afflictions await us, but not able to draw back (Acts xx. 22, 23). The note and mark of His Rule are always the crucifixion of the self-life to the glorification of the Christ-life, and the combination of circumstances, which lock with His inspirations, as the wards of a lock with its key. Whether to act or rest, whether to speak or be still, whether to go in or go out—all will be made clear by the witness and leading of the Spirit in the depths of our heart.

XLI

"I Believe in the Holy Ghost . . ."

Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son

THE second clause of these sentences is borrowed from the Nicene Creed, which is recited at the Communion Service of the English Church. But it is not the original Creed as adopted by the great Council held at Nicæa in A.D. 325. That ended with the words "in the Holy Ghost," but other clauses were afterwards added to arrest the spread of Arianism, and amongst them the notable one which declares that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father "*and the Son.*"

This addition is one of the standing grounds for the separation between the East and the West. The Eastern Church has never accepted the insertion of these words in the Creed, and it was only in A.D. 1014, that Pope Benedict VIII, under the pressure of the Emperor, consented to use the addition in the service of the Mass, whence it passed into the English Prayer-Book.

But there is much to be said for the addition of the words, "*and the Son,*" for not only do they set forth unmistakably the essential Unity and

Equality of the Father and the Son, but they affirm a very distinct Scripture truth. The River of Water of Life, which beyond question is an emblem of the Mission of the Spirit, proceeds from the Throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. xxii. 1). Notice that it is *one* Throne, but jointly occupied (Rev. v. 6), for God is One. In addition to this there is a wealth of testimony, which all goes to show that both the Father and the Son are concerned in the communication of the Spirit to the Church and the Individual. "I will pray the Father, and *He* shall give you another Comforter"; and again, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for, if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, *I* will send Him unto you" (John xiv.16, xvi. 7).

Probably the clearest definition of the province of the Father and the Son in the gift of the Holy Spirit is that given by the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear" (Acts ii. 33). In the mystery of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit are One, but in the order of their fellowship in the Redemption and Sanctification of Men, the Father is the Origin and Source, the Son is the Mediator and Channel, whilst the Spirit

is the Gift of God to the heart of the believer. *Of* the Father, and *through* the Son. "*Through* Christ Jesus we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 18).

It must never be forgotten that God's one purpose and aim in Creation is to realize or reproduce Himself in the work of His Hands; and in order to effect this the Holy Spirit has come forth from the abysmal depths of the Deity. We find Him at work in the long physical transformations by which this earth was prepared to be the Home of Man, and the Theatre for the evolution of God's plan. "The Spirit of God brooded on the face of the waters." It was to His operation that the emergence of Kosmos from chaos was due, and the separation of the light from darkness, of land from water, of the day from night. He superintended the long climb of organic life from the tiny infusoria to the gigantic prehistoric animals. Throughout the patriarchal and other preparatory eras the same mighty Spirit was ever striving with the obtuseness and sin of men, until Jesus, through His creative energy, was born of the Virgin Mother, *then* the long process reached its culmination. The voice that sounded over the waters of Baptism proclaimed Him to be the Beloved Son in whom God was well pleased.

But this was not all. That life in which Deity and Humanity combined in perfect harmony passed through death and resurrection, each of which was superintended by the gracious operation of the Spirit (Heb. ix. 14; Rom. i. 14), and finally ascended to the right hand of power, that it might become reduplicated and reproduced in all who believe. This is what the Holy Spirit has come to secure. At first he proceeded forth to form and raise the Body of the Christ; now he proceeds from Father and Son to form Christ in our hearts, and repeat His beauty and strength in the Church, which is left on earth to carry out and accomplish His Redemptive purpose.

"Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name, Maker, and Builder, Thou of houses not made with hands? What! have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same? Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?"

XLII

"I Believe in the Holy Ghost . . ."

Who with the Father and the Son together is Worshipped and Glorified

"O COME, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, for He is our God"—such is the repeated summons of the Psalter. It seems as though human voices are not loud or sweet enough to satisfy the Psalmist, and he calls on the heavens with their myriad constellations to be glad, and the earth with all her wealth of life to rejoice. The roar of the full and brimming sea, the branches and leaves of the trees of the wood, the incense of flowers, the hum of insects are all pressed into the blessed minstrelsy of Praise.

There is a great difference between Thanksgiving and Praise. In the former, we bless God for what He has done on our behalf, in the latter for what He is in Himself; and therefore Praise is more and greater than thanksgiving. It is less likely to be vitiated or coloured by the selfish element, which is always so ready to intrude. Praise is the purest, loftiest, noblest act, and the

one most like the employment of Heaven, which is within our human reach. Losing sight of earth and time, borne on strong and steady wing, the soul mounts up as on the wings of an eagle, which makes its straight course to the sun, and seems to seek absorption by its dazzling splendour.

In the service of the Prayer-book, the climax is reached in the noble *Te Deum*. The suppliant begins with confession and absolution. Tremulous and low his voice, broken its accents, but presently his soul begins to bestir itself, and prune its wings for soaring. " Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost " rings like a bugle-call, leading to the further incitement of the congregation to come before God's presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms. After Praise has spent itself, there are supplications and intercessions for all men, and specially for the saints.

Praise is Worship, but Worship is probably more than Praise. In Praise the soul utters itself audibly, but Worship is its prostration in the presence of God. Without a spoken word, we sometimes prostrate ourselves at the foot of the jasper-throne, casting our crowns there, and content to leave God to interpret what we can find no words to express.

It is remarkable to notice throughout the Bible that the Ascriptions of Praise and Worship are generally threefold. In Psalm xcix. each of three stanzas ends with a call to worship, and the words, "Holy is He," or "the Lord our God is holy." In Isaiah's sublime vision, one seraph is heard crying to another, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts" (vi. 3). In the Apocalypse, the four living creatures have no rest day and night, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

It could hardly be otherwise, when once a true vision has been granted into the nature of the Holy Trinity. Those who have seen the throne, encircled by its emerald rainbow, with its light of sardonyx, its Lamb, and the seven lamps of fire that burn before it, cannot refrain from the Doxology which includes each Person of the Godhead.

It is sometimes asked if we should pray to the Holy Spirit. So far as we can discover, the proper procedure of the Court of Heaven is to pray to the Father, through the Son, by the gracious assistance of the Holy Spirit. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings

that cannot be uttered." No harm is done, if we pray to the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, the hymns in which we address the Spirit, asking Him to descend or come, are prayers addressed to Him. To whichever Person in the Godhead we direct our prayers, they are sure of reaching the right quarter. Address your envelope as you may, the letter will be delivered. But on the whole we must admit that the Spirit is in our hearts, or in the heart of the Church, ennobling, teaching, quickening us, suggesting our petitions, and seeking to glorify Christ, who is ever the supreme object of His activity.

But in Praise and Worship, let us include the Holy Spirit in our ascriptions. Let us worship and glorify Him. Let us bring Gold, and Frankincense, and Myrrh. And let us cultivate the holy habit of Worship. Often when we are sad and depressed, when we are beset by sin and tempted of the Devil, when "the mists hang thick o'er hill and fell," it will greatly help us to join the great assembly of blessed ones, Angels, Saints, and the Spirits of the just made perfect, in their high worship, contributing our little rill to that mighty current which is ever pouring into the Ocean heart of God.

XLIII

"I Believe in the Holy Ghost . . ."

Who spake by the Prophets

THE Apostle Peter supplies the thought which is crystallized in these words. He tells us that the Spirit of Christ was in the Prophets, when they foretold the grace which was to come to us. They could not decipher all His meaning. That Christ should suffer and enter His glory by the blood-stained path was clear, but the time and the characteristics of the time were hidden from their most careful enquiry. He goes on to say, that the olden prophets, with the Apostles of the early Church, and the very angels, blend their wondering and adoring glances on the uplifted Cross, the Grave, and the Ascension Mount (I Peter i. 11-12).

A further light is furnished in his second Epistle, where he tells us that the written word of prophecy resembles a lamp shining in a dimly-lighted place, to be extinguished at dawn, that it never came from the prophets' own prompting, nor by human will, but men spake from God as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit. The idea seems to be that of boats hurrying along some swiftly flowing

current, which carries them on its broad bosom seawards. (II Peter i. 19-21).

These remarkable utterances by one whose thought is saturated with the Old Testament Scriptures, remind us of the great work of the Holy Spirit in preparing the way for Christ. In many of the Old Testament passages, which refer to Him, He is represented as a Divine Power acting on the material universe, or the physical life of men; brooding over Chaos; sent forth to renew the face of the earth; enabling the artists to adorn the Tabernacle, and nerving heroes to superhuman feats of strength and endurance; but *here* His personal and individual Ministry in glorifying the Son of God is distinctly recognised. He is described as "the Spirit of Christ," and as now, so then, He bears witness to Him. Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit which underlies prophecy.

It is almost impossible to formulate a perfectly satisfactory definition of Inspiration. A literal rendering of the word gives us *in-breathing*. We may say, therefore, that Inspiration is the in-breathed thought and word of God. We may, also, get help from the phrase used by Peter, that the prophets were borne along as on a stream of holy impulse. The word of the Lord was as a

fire in their bones, and they were weary of forbearing, and could not stay. Messages and visions were given them by the Divine Spirit, working in the depths of their nature, but they were left to select such words as seemed the fittest medium of utterance, though even these were winnowed by the superintendence of the same Spirit.

Difficult as it is to define Inspiration, the least instructed are aware of its presence. It is a divine quality in the sacred writings, which speaks for itself, and betrays its presence by inimitable characteristics. Inspired words search the heart, grapple with the conscience, inflame the affections, enlighten the judgment, summon the soul into the presence of God, awaken responses from the lowest depths, communicate the divine nature, and bring eternity into the simplest, plainest, and most ordinary lives. We recognise the saline quality of the ocean wave, so soon as the sea-water touches our lips. There is no need to prove to us that an avenue of limes is fragrant, or that a rose exhales rare perfume, our senses are immediately aware of their respective charms. Sugar is sweet apart from logic, or analysis, or explanation as to the source from which its sweetness is derived. So it is impossible to read the Bible carefully and thoughtfully, without realising

its intrinsic and unique qualities. The bush burns with fire. The shechinah trembles between the Cherubim. The still small voice thrills the soul. There is a glory on the sacred pages which never lay on sea or shore. As amid the human limitations of Jesus of Nazareth, there was the ardent effulgence and glory of Deity; so though the divine thoughts are incarnate in human phrase, they betray themselves, they cannot be hid, they proclaim their source.

We owe a profound debt to modern research, which has thrown so much light on the Old Testament, practically rediscovering the larger portion of it, and setting it in a new light; but let us remember that its main message is not to the intellect but the heart, and that we shall never derive the full help and comfort it was meant to impart, unless we submit ourselves to Him who originally inspired it, in the faith that He will reveal its secret, sacred message.

XLIV

"I Believe in . . . the Holy Catholic Church"

WHAT is the Holy Catholic Church? In the venerable minute-book of Rothwell Congregational Church, 250 years old, the following words of Dr. Francis Junius, Professor of Leyden, "of that choice University in Holland" (1595), are quoted by the first Pastor, written in an exquisitely neat and beautiful hand.

"The Holy Catholic Church is the Congregation of all them, who by the Election of God are called together in Christ Jesus to Eternall Life, Eph. ii. 21: of which part is in heaven as the Elect Angells and holy men and women made perfect; the other parts gathered to Christ here on earth. This Church in regard of God's dwelling in and possessing itt is called the Temple, Court, Tabernacle, City, and Kingdom of God: in regard of that excellent communion with Christ, named his spouse, wife, etc., friend, beloved, because of their mutuall affection; for worth, a Queene most faire, for holiness a dove, virgin, etc.; for propagation of children the Mother of us all; for largeness, the universall Church; for number "the only

one," of which argument the whole booke of the Canticles is a most plenteous word. This Church is not made by men for they are naturall, carnall, and weake, nor Angells for they are not authors of life, but ministering spirits for the Elect. God the Father alone begott itt in Christ by his Holy Spiritt, according to his good will for his own Glorie."

The substance of this, most evangelical Christians to-day would heartily accept, demurring only at that clause which incorporates " the elect Angels " in the Church, which is the mystical Body and Bride of Christ. It may also be admitted that there is a considerable force in the objection of those who would exclude the Old Testament saints from this High and Lofty Organism, on the ground that the Church only came into existence at the Resurrection of Christ, and that her history dates from that golden moment in the past until that other golden moment in the distant future, when, at the consummation of the present age, the whole Church shall be presented to God, " a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Whilst admitting the truth of this, we would at least urge that the materials for any given Church or Temple must be excavated before they

can be used, and that the lower courses of the spiritual Temple are said by the Apostle to consist of Apostles and *Prophets*. Why should we not believe that the elements of the Church were in solution before Jesus died, and suddenly crystallized when He rose? But if any adduce the Old Testament analogy that Eve was taken from Adam's side, whilst he slept, and that Joseph's brethren and his wife stood in different ranks of fellowship with himself, we will not argue the matter further, but wait until the light of another world discloses the whole mystery of Christ and His Church.

When our Lord told His vehement Apostle that He would build His Church on the bed-rock of his newly-uttered confession, it is surely legitimate to believe that he had already selected, prepared, and shaped the materials, in previous ages, even before the time when Enoch walked with God.

We distinguish therefore between any specific congregation of faithful men, who meet for the observance of the Sacraments, and the Preaching of the pure Word of God (according to the definition of the Church of England Article), and that great all-inclusive body, which is independent of century and territory, and includes all who are

united with Christ by a living faith. It is to this that our Lord alludes, when He says, "I will build My Church."

Christ is the great Master-Builder. "Behold," said the Prophet, "the Man whose name is the Branch, He shall grow up out of his place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord; even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory." Surely it was to these words that the Lord referred when He said, "I will build My Church." For the site He chose, not some sinless planet, but this sin-stained earth; for the materials, not unfallen angels, but weak and unworthy mortals; for the plan, not that which would redound to the glory of His Might, but of His Grace. Amid the *débris* and ruins of the ages, He is building that which will stand for ever, the indestructible Temple and Palace of God, from the foundations laid in His Blood to the top-stone glistening in the dawn of eternity, on which will be the ascription of Glory to God in the highest.

XLV

"I Believe . . . in the Holy Catholic Church"

We have seen that the Holy Catholic Church is composed of all, of whatever church or sect, who are united with Christ by a living faith. They may never have been recognised as belonging to one of our many religious organizations on earth; like the dying thief, may never have entered into union with Christ till the article of death; or like George Fox may have repudiated all existing churches, because they could not agree with them in certain particulars; but they are bound by a living faith to the great Head of the Church; and such a faith uniting to Christ, necessarily unites the believer to all who are similarly connected with Him, although he never heard of their existence, or looked into their face.

(1) In John x. 16, our Lord spoke of those other (Gentile) souls which did not belong to the Jewish fold, and said, with a divine imperative, "them also I must bring, and they will listen to My voice. They shall become one *flock* under one Shepherd." Notice that word *flock*. In A.V. the Greek word was mistakenly rendered "one *fold*."

But the Greek word is not so, and the translators have done rightly in rendering it by *flock*. There may be many folds, but there is only one flock. Sheep may be contained in the Baptist, the Presbyterian, the Episcopal Fold, and may be strongly tarred with the brush of sectarianism, but there is only one Flock, and the nearer you get to the Shepherd and to the upper lawns, you lose sight of the hurdles of the folds, and see the whole flock gathering around the Lamb, who as a shepherd leads them to living fountains of water, where they thirst no more, and God wipes away all tears. That one Flock is the Holy Catholic Church ;—*holy*, because separated from the goats ; *catholic*, because the great multitude is composed of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues.

(2) Before our Master died, He returned to the same theme in His High Priestly prayer, in which He gives two infallible signs of those who belong to His Church. He speaks, *first*, of those whom the Father had given Him out of the world (John xvii. 6, 9, etc.). When we ask who those may be thus selected from the rest of mankind, we get our answer from another discourse, in which He said, " Every one whom the Father gives Me will come to Me, and him who comes to Me I will never on

any account drive away" (vi. 37: *Weymouth's trans.*).

All that the Father gives Him come to Him; all, therefore, who come to Him may be reckoned as having been given Him of the Father. They may come from the east and west, from the north or south, but if only they come they are included in the Divine Gift, they can never perish, they shall be His, in that day when He shall make up His jewels, and all these are included in the Holy Catholic Church.

But there is a *second* definition of the same persons, in that wonderful prayer, when the Master says, "Nor is it for them alone that I make request: it is also for those who trust in Me, through their word, that they all may be one" (John xvii., 20, 21: *Weymouth*). Here is comfort indeed! You may have been recognised by no Church, received by no minister, confirmed by no rite; your name may never have been enrolled in a list of communicants, or on a Church-roll, you may belong to the Roman, the Anglican, or the Eastern Church, or to no Church at all, you may be a Ritualist or a Salvationist, but if amid many failures and sins, you are believing in Jesus Christ, as your Divine Saviour, you are most certainly a member of the Holy Catholic Church,

from which as Savonarola told the Pope's Legate, no power can separate you.

(3) The Apostle Paul tells us that the hidden Secret of the Church had been revealed to Him, and entrusted to His stewardship, that He might unfold it to the minds of men (Eph. iii. 6). He was led to understand that Gentiles had as much right to be members of the Church as Jews. "The Gentiles," he said, "are joint heirs with us, and form one body with us, and have the same interest as we have in the promise, which has been made good to us."

This thought is the special burden of the Epistle to the Ephesians, which may be described as the Epistle of High Churchmanship, so saturated is it with the conception of the oneness of all believers in the Holy Catholic Church.

XLVI

"I Believe . . . in the Holy Catholic Church"

In the Epistle to the Ephesians the Apostle deals primarily with the Church—not with *churches*, but with the *Church;* and under three comparisons.

It is a Temple. God's first Dwelling Place was "the High and Holy Place" of the Tented Sky. Then, according to the thought of pious Jews, He dwelt in the temple built by Solomon. Next the Nature of Jesus provided Him a Home. But now another Temple has been prepared for Him. It is "built upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom, each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the spirit."

The word *Temple* means "to cut." Before the Romans erected a temple to any of their gods, the services of the augur were called in to cut off a piece of soil, by sacred rites, from the common

ground around; and is not this fencing off of the soil emblematic of the separation of saved spirits to be the special shrine for the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is this that invests the Church with its vitality. All other organisations rise, have their career of usefulness and glory, to wane ultimately as the moon does; but age after age the Church persists, because she is constantly being renewed from within. Though her outward body may be subjected to the fiercest processes of disintegration, yet her inward being is renewed day by day.

It is a body, of which Christ is Head

"There is one Body!" says the Apostle (Eph. iii. 1, 13, 16). "And as the Body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."

Each member of the Body has its own function; and it would be a pity, therefore, to obliterate denominational distinctions, because their differentiation probably leads to the presentation of the whole circle of truth in a more forcible manner, than if the whole were equally held by all. Just as each note in the chord must preserve its identity to secure a perfect harmony; and as each band of colour of the prism must be true to

itself, if a perfect ray of pure light is to be produced, so each denomination probably realises a very distinct purpose in God's plan. But each must hold the truth in love, none thinking that it has a monopoly of the truth ; it is only "*with all saints*" that we can comprehend the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, of the Love of Christ.

Each member of the Body is necessary to the rest. If the eye stand for the High Anglican and the hand for the Free Churchman, "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee :" or if the head stand for the highly-placed ecclesiastic and the feet for the illiterate and poor, "the head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you." "Nay," says the Holy Spirit by the Apostle, "those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary."

Schism is therefore only possible when members cease to have the same care one of another, when we despise each other, or cease to suffer or rejoice in the experiences which befall our fellow-members. Schism does not consist in a difference of view but in a difference of spirit, and in a lack of spiritual sympathy. It may, therefore, become the sin of the believer who most conservatively maintains his outward connection with the historic

Church, if he depreciates or denies his weaker and less regular brethren in Christ.

When any member of the Body is injured, how soon it affects the whole organism with pain and heaviness; and the man begins to nourish and cherish it to restore its perfect health. As soon as the *efferent* nerves flash to the Head tidings of the hurt, the *efferent* nerves bring back the impulses for care and comfort. Ah, how quick the sympathetic union between Christ and the least of His members! He nourisheth and cherisheth it . . . because we are members of His Body! (Eph. v. 30, 31.) Let us do likewise.

It is the Bride of the Lamb. (Eph. v. 25, etc.) Like another Ruth, through the love of One in whose eyes she has found favour, she reigns over the lands where once in rustic guise she wrought in humble toil. For some reason or other Christ wants our love, and therefore has paid our debts, redeemed us to Himself, changed our name, and given to us to sit with Him on His throne. "Come hither," cried the Angel, "I will show thee the Bride of the Lamb."

XLVII

"I Believe . . . in the Communion of Saints"

THERE is Communion in Worship. How often we have recited these words to ourselves, when alone in some distant land, or voyaging across the waste of waters, or detained by illness, either personal or relative, in our home, whilst the stopping bells told of the whole multitude gathered within the familiar walls. We have taken up the Prayer-Book and slowly recited the office, we have read the Psalms and sung the hymns, we have compared Lesson and Collect, till the Message of the Christian Year has sunk into mind and soul; and suddenly our chamber has become filled with holy presences, and we have realised that we were not alone, but formed part of an innumerable company, which no one could number, who with us are ascending the steps of the Heavenly Temple. Their songs are wafted to our ears, the very atmosphere they breathe enwraps us also.

How much blessing would accrue to those who are detained from Church on Sunday morning or evening, if they would cease to think of the physical deprivation, and would remember that they

were spirits who, though apparently imprisoned and confined by the body, were really independent of it, and could go forth to mingle with the vast crowds that surround God's throne, in ceaseless worship.

> Call me, rather, silent voices,
> Upward through the starry tract,
> To the glimmering heights beyond me,
> On and always on.

There is Communion in Prayer and Service. "If two of you," said the Master, "agree as touching anything that ye ask . . ." The word translated *agree* is "are in symphony." When the Holy Spirit strikes two spirits, in accord with Himself, and they utter the self-same prayer or breathe the same desire, there is a lovely symphony, which is very dear to God. They may not be conscious of the oneness, and have entered into no compact with each other; their concert is altogether due to the Spirit, but such prayer never miscarries. Cornelius prays in his house, and Peter on the house-top; Ananias prays in his home at Damascus, and Saul in the house of Judas; these are but specimens of myriads of instances, in which spirit has blended with spirit before the mercy-seat.

In his Revival Lectures, Finney tells of a pious

man in Western New York who was sick of consumption. He was poor and had been sick for years. An unconverted merchant was very kind to him, and the only return he could make was to pray for his salvation. By-and-bye, to the astonishment of everybody, the merchant was converted, and a great revival followed. After the death of this poor man, his widow put his diary into Mr. Finney's hands, from which it appeared that he had been in the habit of setting apart certain hours in the day to pray for certain churches and missionary stations. His diary contained entries like the following: "To-day I have been enabled to offer the prayer of faith for the outpouring of the Spirit on——" And it was subsequently discovered that mighty revivals had commenced and swept over those localities, nearly *in the exact order of his praying*. It was thus that he was able to take part in the work of God in places that he would never visit.

A station under the care of a missionary in connection with the China Inland Mission was the scene of constant revival; and the secret only leaked out on the return of Mr. Hudson Taylor to England, when he came in touch with a single disciple who made it the subject of his unceasing prayer.

There is Communion in Suffering. Whenever a colliery accident, a massacre of Armenians or Bulgarians, a shipwreck, a railway accident, or a battlefield strewn with wounded, elicits sympathy, prayer, and ready help, throughout Christian communities, there is a blessed manifestation of the communion of saints. One member suffers, and all the other members suffer with it.

"As there is but one Body, and one Spirit, and one Hope of our Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, may we henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of Truth and Peace, of Faith and Charity, so that we may with one mind and one mouth glorify Thee, O God, our Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

XLVIII

"I Believe . . . in the Forgiveness of Sins"

This clause in the Creed is ever memorable for the comfort it brought to the heart of Martin Luther, when he was passing through an agony of conviction, and it reminds us of Psalm cxxx., which begins with *De Profundis* and ends with *Plenteous Redemption*.

Four of the greatest saints of the Church have left on record their love for that Psalm, which contains the comforting and inspiring assurance, "*There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*" Luther set it to one of his grandest songs, and it was sung around his bier, as his body was carried to its last resting-place. John Owen, the great Puritan commentator, tells us that in a time of great depression the verse just quoted was the key to his prison-house. John Wesley tells us that on the eve of his memorable visit to Germany, a sermon on the same text was the means of a great revival in his soul. And Jonathan Edwards, when he lay a-dying, noticing how the watches in his sick-chamber went

repeatedly to see if the morning were breaking, recalled this Psalm, and spoke of it as having been the great solace of his life. It is remarkable what different stages of experience are met by the same words. Christian life is a spiral staircase; we go round and round, always coming back to the same view from another level. As saints grow in the likeness of God, they come back and back again on the fundamental principles of forgiveness and redemption and peace through the mediation of Christ. When I stood at Serampore, beside the grave of William Carey, it brought a mist of tears to my eyes, as I spelt out the verse that he himself selected :

> A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
> On thy kind arms I fall,
> Be thou my strength and righteousness,
> My Saviour and my All.

Dr. Draper, the great scientist, has invented an instrument of such delicacy, that he is able to photograph constellations which cannot be detected by the eye ; another has invented an instrument which will register the pulse of an insect. As civilization advances, we become quicker to appreciate shades of expression and harmony which would have escaped less sensitive ages. Similarly the growth of the soul is diagnosed by

the delicacy and quickness with which it discriminates right and wrong. Our Christian life is not a deepening one unless we are becoming more and more sensitive of shades of selfishness, envy, jealousy, and uncharitableness, which fill us with shame, and make us cry out for forgiveness. To the end of life the greatest saints will call themselves the chief of sinners, and confess that their only hope is in Him who came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water *and blood*.

It is *Forgiveness* that we need! That we should *forget* is not enough. In one of his books, Mr. Edward Bellamy refers to the hypothesis that memory may consist of an infinite number of very minute fibres, each of which represents the recollection of one fact; and he goes on to suggest that if somehow any one fibre, which records some daring sin could be dissolved, the remorseful recollection of that sin would be obliterated. He depicts the case of a woman who had committed one terrible sin, and was mesmerized, so to speak, by its perpetual presence. She dared not enter society or face recognition, but lived under a spell. After submitting herself to this imaginary process, somehow the fibre of memory which held the record of her sin was discovered and dissolved,

and she came out of the trance with great lightness of soul. But that is a mean way of getting away from the past. It is like a woman murdering her child, and then taking laudanum to drown the memory of her crime.

Sir Arthur Helps suggests that the best way to escape the memory of our sin is to buy a bottle of "sleep-medicine," by taking draughts of which memory is drugged. Some people seem to invest heavily in this sleep-medicine, rushing from continent to continent, from society to society, from one amusement to another, never daring to be alone, always drugging their memory with opiates.

No, none of these remedies will really avail. They would not have availed Augustine, or Luther, or Bunyan. When we are in the depths of conviction, there is only one star shining far above the pit's mouth which has power to raise us from the depth to the height, from the depth in which we cry, as though we alone were the sinner of sinners, "*God be merciful to me*, the sinner," to the height, where in the ecstasy of assured acceptance, we cry, "*Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

XLIX

"I Believe in the Forgiveness of Sins"

FORGIVENESS is the one cry of the converted soul. "Then began I," says Bunyan, "with sad and careful heart, to consider the nature and largeness of my sin, and to search into the Word of God, if I could in any place espy a word of promise, by which I might take relief. Wherefore I began to consider that of Mark iii., "All manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto the sons of men," which place, methought, at a blush, did contain a large and glorious promise for the pardon of high offences, but considering the place more fully, I thought it was rather to be understood, as relating more chiefly to those, who had, while in a natural state, committed such things as are there mentioned; but not to me, who had not only received light and mercy, but that had, both after, and also contrary to that, so slighted Christ as I had done. And now was I both a burden and a terror to myself; now was I weary of my life, and yet afraid to die. Oh! how gladly now would I have been any body but myself! Anything but a man, and in any condition but

my own! for there was nothing that did pass more frequently over my mind, than that it was impossible for me to be forgiven my transgressions, and to be saved from wrath to come."

"And as I was thus musing, and in my studies, that saying came in upon me, 'If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who should stand? but there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared' (Ps. cxxx. 3, 4). These were good words to me, especially the latter part thereof; to wit, that there is forgiveness with the Lord, that He might be loved, and had in reverence, for it was thus made out to me. 'That the great God did set so high an esteem upon the love of His poor creatures, that rather than He would go without their love, He would pardon their transgressions.'"

"One day," he continues, "as I was passing into the field, and that, too, with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, 'Thy Righteousness is in Heaven.' And, methought, withal, I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand; *there* was my righteousness. It was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor my bad frame that made

my righteousness worse; for my Righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'"

"Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed; I was loosened from my afflictions and irons, my temptations also fled away, for by this Scripture (1 Cor. i. 30) I saw that the man Christ Jesus, as He is distinct from us, as touching His bodily presence, so He is our Righteousness and Sanctification before God. Here, therefore, I lived for some time very sweetly at peace with God through Christ. Oh! methought Christ! Christ! there was nothing but Christ that was before my eyes, now I could look from myself to Him, and could reckon, that all those graces of God that were now green on me, were like those cracked groats and fourpence-halfpennies that rich men carry in their purses when their gold is in their trunks at home. Oh! I saw my gold was in my trunk at home! In Christ my Lord and Saviour. Now Christ was all; all my righteousness, all my sanctification, all my redemption."

"At another time, yet suddenly there fell upon me a great cloud of darkness; I was so overrun in my soul with a senseless, heartless frame of spirit that I could not feel my soul to move or stir after grace and life by Christ; I was as if my loins were

broken, or as if my hands and feet had been tied and bound with chains. After I had been in this condition some three or four days, as I was sitting by the fire, I suddenly felt this word to sound in my heart, 'I must go to Jesus.' At this my former darkness fled away, and the blessed things of heaven were set in my view. Then with joy I told my wife, 'O now, I know, I know!' But that night was a good night to me, I have had but few better. I longed for the company of some of God's people, that I might have imparted unto them what God had showed me. Christ was a precious Christ to my soul that night; I could scarce lie in my bed for joy, and peace, and triumph, through Christ. Hebrew xii. 22 was a blessed Scripture to me for many days together after this.

"The words are these, 'Ye are come to Mount Sion, to the city of the living God, and to God the Judge of all, and *to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament*, and to the blood of sprinkling.' Through this sentence the Lord led me over and over, first to this word, and then to that; and showed me the wonderful story in every one of them. Blessed be God for having mercy on me!"

L

"I Believe . . . in the Forgiveness of Sins"

FROM the consideration of John Bunyan's experience, these particulars arise, which need to be re-emphasized to every succeeding generation. Here at least is a theme which never grows old.

Forgiveness, to give the conscience rest, must be founded on Justice. When David weakly and indulgently forgave Absalom, without confession or reparation of the wrong he had done, he inaugurated a policy which led to the undoing of his realm; and if God were to forgive us, with an easy and benign readiness, and without making it clear that He had been at pains to do so, consistently with the reign of His universal and eternal equity, there would be an incessant and unappeasable fear on our part that an outraged Law would arise to demand compensation, with the alternative, if it were not given, of effecting the overthrow of the Moral Universe. Therefore

we are comforted in knowing that God was Himself such and satisfied the demands of Righteousness. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." He shows His righteousness, when passing over sins in His forbearance. He shows His righteousness at this present season, "that He might Himself be just, and the justifier of Him that hath faith in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26).

Forgiveness is through Jesus Christ. "Be it known unto you, therefore," said the Apostle, who himself had drunk deeply of the cup of conviction and forgiveness, that *through this man* is proclaimed unto you remission of sins" (Acts xiii. 38). We can never understand what it was that our Saviour did for us all upon the Cross, but we believe that in some way He made a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction, and atonement for the sins of the world, and it is, therefore, in His name that we ask to be forgiven. It is with a meaning which the Psalmist never knew, that we say, "For Thy Name sake pardon my iniquity, for it is great."

Forgiveness is contingent on Confession. "If we *confess* our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (I John i. 9). For a whole year David refused to confess his great sin, and he tells us that so long as he kept silence, his bones

waxed old by reason of his anguish of soul, and his flesh was consumed with fever-heat; but directly he said "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord," directly he acknowledged his iniquity and ceased to hide his sin, the sweet sense of forgiveness stole into his heart (Ps. xxxii. 5). In confession, which should be to God alone, the soul takes God's side against itself. It is not necessary to wait till tears rise in the eyes, or strong compunction wrings the conscience. Sometimes we begin in cold blood to confess that we have perverted that which was right and it did not profit us, and as we proceed we are sensible of the floods of uncontrollable sorrow rising. But if they come not, still the confession is good, when the will is bent and broken. Tell God your fault, extenuating and excusing nothing, taking all the blame to yourself, press out all the black blood, accept the most deeply-spoken verdict of your soul against itself.

When possible Confession and Reparation to man should accompany the soul's confession to God. "When possible," because it is not always legitimate or wise to confess everything to those who, but for your confession, would never have been acquainted with a certain form of evil. Under perplexing conditions of this kind, it is

well to say to the Lord that you are perfectly willing to say all and do all that He may require of you, only that He must make so clear what He does require, that you may know it without the least hesitation. He must go before you, and lead you in the way.

The Hebrews were taught to restore the value of property that they had injured, directly or indirectly, and to add a fifth part (Lev. v. 16). And it is impossible to believe that a lower standard should guide our conduct in all cases, like those specified in the ancient law (Lev. vi. 1-5).

Forgiveness is Instantaneous and Absolute. He pardons immediately on our confession and abundantly (Isa. lv. 7); He removes sin as far as dawn is from sunset (Ps. ciii. 12); He casts all our sins into the depth of the sea (Micah vii. 19). The most remarkable statement of all is that of the new covenant, as given by Jeremiah, and the writer of Ep. to Hebrews, and evidently referred to by our Lord, when the cup of the supper was in His hand (Luke xxii. 70), " their sins and iniquities will I remember no more " (Heb. viii. 12). They will never be brought up against us, they will never be allowed to diminish the blessing God wants to bestow, they can never be mentioned at the great White Throne or for ever.

Forgiveness binds us to God. We fear to grieve Him again. The thought of all that we have cost Him deters us from doing the like again. Indeed, the memory of that grieved face makes us more than ever anxious not to crucify Him afresh, or put Him to an open shame.

LI

"I Believe . . . in the Resurrection of the Body"

THE Apostle tells us that the Body of the Believer is a purchased possession of God, which waits to be redeemed from the power of corruption (Eph. i. 14). The work of our Lord, therefore, includes the entire nature. It is not enough for Him to save the soul, illuminate the mind, purify the affections, and indwell the spirit. He has set himself to fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His Glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself (Phil. iii. 21).

The question has unceasingly been asked from the earliest days, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" And the only answer is the analogy which the Apostle draws between the bare grain, which the farmer casts into the furrows of the earth, and its reappearance in the glorious body with which God endows it, when the harvest covers the fields with waving gold. "So also is the Resurrection of the

Dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. . . . The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven. . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Cor. xv. 35-50).

If we press this analogy, we must admit that the germ of the Risen Body is already within us. Before the cone of wheat falls into the ground to die, it still bears in its heart the germ of the golden-headed stalk: we may, therefore, confidently assert that now and here, whilst our body, which is as the seed to the essential germ, is still vigorous and active, the principle, which is to break into such glorious fruition is most certainly present.

The analogy has been pressed home a point or two further by one profound thinker of a former generation who suggests that the decay of the outer man, like the dissolution of the albuminous matter in the seed, is really the nourishment of the spiritual germ, through all the experiences of physical weakening and decay. "The germ lies hidden in the flesh of our mortality through what

we call life: what we call death completes the process: the mere husk or shell within which the spiritual body was forming, is put off with painful struggle and buried away with the dead leaves of autumn, and in Resurrection the Lord gives a body as it hath pleased Him, wherewith it may stand up and maintain its relations with the beings and objects of the celestial sphere."

It is clear that the sacred writers can offer but a partial revelation of the properties and powers of that Resurrection Body. These are among the things which it is not lawful, nor possible, for man to utter. We know but in part, and can but prophesy in part; we can see some of the great outstanding shafts and pillars of truth, though we may not be able to descry the connecting arches which bind them into a symmetrical and beautiful structure. The images of the things in the heavens are revealed to us, but the heavenly things themselves, who can know? Of this at least we are sure that "if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have in the heavens a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal. For in this we groan, longing to put on over this our dwelling-place from heaven, because we would not be unclothed, but clothed upon" (2 Cor. v. 1-4).

Gleams of that Resurrection Body have been given to human eyes. By the Risen Lord it was clearly apparent to those who had loved Him. Perhaps we get glimpses of it in those hours when the fires of Holy Love and Purity transfigure the very bodies of our dear ones, and shine through them, as through porcelain. In any case, we cannot doubt that we shall recognise again the features, the gestures, the very voice of our beloved.

> Daughter of Heaven! our grieving hearts repose
> On the dear thought that we once more shall see
> Thy beauty—like Himself our Master rose—
> So shall that beauty its old rights maintain,
> And thy sweet spirit own those eyes again.

There shall be a Resurrection of the unjust as well as of the just. What can their bodies be but the embodiments of the evil passions which have wrought within them! But of the just the body shall surely be the perfect vehicle of the holy soul. Not tiring in service, however prolonged; not failing to give expression to the loftiest and most ardent volitions of the spirit; not needing sleep or rest, or food; but ever lending itself to the impulse of the indwelling spirit (Ezek. i. 12). "When He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

LII

"I Believe . . . in the Life Everlasting"

It is clear that life everlasting is something more than life that lasts for ever. Immortality, great and wonderful as it is, cannot exhaust the meaning of these words. The Greek philosophers were aware of the Immortality of the soul, but they never knew what we mean, when under the teaching of Christ, we profess our Faith in Everlasting Life.

It is equally clear that this frequent phrase does not mean heaven, because, in several passages of the New Testament we are taught that our eternal life does not date from the moment of death, as, for instance, "He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life" (John iii. 36). Our everlasting life is begun, and in the great future, when we see all things as they are, we shall know that our birthday was not that of our physical birth, but of that reception by us of the Christ-life, which shall never cease to expand into the likeness of God.

The Greek word translated *everlasting*, in the A.V., is rendered by *eternal* in the R.V. (Matt. xxv.

46). The note of duration is not its prominent characteristic, but rather quality than quantity. It is *What sort of Life?* rather than *How Long of Life?* That this is so will be made clear by the citation of one familiar verse, "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." This being so, we can well understand the words, "He that hath the Son hath THE Life" (*i.e.*, the life, which is life indeed), he that hath not the Son of God hath not THE Life" (1 John v. 12).

Not life. Recent physical science affirms that there is no such thing as dead matter. The head of a well-known college in U.S.A. told me that when taking a walk with one of his young-woman students, he struck a piece of rock with his walking-stick, and asked her whether it was alive or dead. "Professor," she said, "it's alive." Matter is only a form of electricity, the atoms of which are *Electrones*.

It is clear, however, that the rock is destitute of the sentient life of the dog, and this also is destitute of the moral life of the child; and this again entirely destitute of the spiritual life of a Moses or a John; and even these may be destitute of a side of experience which is familiar enough

to those who have crossed the border-line. It is evident, then, that we may enjoy the life of some lower place, but be entirely destitute of the life of the planes above. This is what the Apostle meant by saying, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." You may be living in the world of art, or science or politics, and a very vivid and intense life it may be, and yet may never have entered that other kingdom, where real life is alone to be found.

The Real Life can only be obtained from the Living Christ. There has been a revival of late of an old suggestion that life may be spontaneously generated. This was originally the theory of Dr. Bastian, who filled a bottle with hay, sealed it hermetically to guard against the inclusion of air, baked it so as to kill all the living germs already in the bottle, and found, after an interval had elapsed, that germs of life were still breeding life. But Dr. Tyndall and Dr. Dallinger proved that the vitality of those germs was so great that they will exist though the intensest heat be applied to them, and that, therefore, the proof-experiment of spontaneous generation broke down.

Many theologians have tried to establish the thesis that the counterpart of spontaneous generation exists in the soul of man, that man

became good by a kind of levelling-up process, and that there is no need for the impartation of Life from without.

To this we oppose the repeated teaching of the New Testament, that only he who has received the Son of God by a living faith, has life. The Eternal Life, which was from Eternity was manifested for a space in the Person of Jesus Christ, passed through death and resurrection, and now from the heart of Him who unites the Divine and the Human perfectly, waits to pour itself forth into all hearts that will yield to and accept it (I John i. 1-4). "This is the witness, that God hath given to us Eternal Life, and this Life is in His Son" (I John v. 11). Open your heart towards Christ, and you will receive Him, and receiving Him, live. You may not always be conscious of its uplifting glory, but the fountain may rise up within you, though its waters make no flashing in the light, and no music as they fall.

The Life which is Life Indeed. To know God, to live in fellowship with God, to be conscious that the Holy Spirit is dwelling within, to yearn over others and help them to realise themselves—this is the Eternal life, unto which the righteous shall go away (Matt. xxv. 46); and to have this is to have the Blessedness of Heaven already.

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